

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations

Clerk Assistant: — Mr. Hopfner from the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the Sixth Report of the said committee, which is as follows:

Your committee has completed its consideration of the reports of the following Crown corporations outstanding from the respective financial years of 1983 and 1984:

Crown Management Board of Saskatchewan (CIC), 1983 & 1984; Agricultural Development Corporation, 1984; Municipal Financing Corporation, 1984; Saskatchewan Government Insurance, 1984; Saskatchewan Water Corporation, 1984.

Your committee has completed consideration of the 1985 reports of the following Crown corporations:

Saskatchewan Computer Utility Corporation, Saskatchewan Minerals, Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation.

Your committee has held 11 meetings since its last report to the legislature which was concurred in on June 19, 1985, including seven meetings during this current legislative session.

Your committee has twenty 1985 reports of corporations to consider in addition to the reports of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation for 1984, and the Saskatchewan Crown Corporations Pension Funds for 1983.

Legislation passed by this Assembly in 1985 has changed that status of Saskoil from a Crown corporation to a publicly-owned corporation registered under The Saskatchewan Business Corporations Act with shares being traded on the stock exchange. There is no longer any statutory requirement for Saskoil to table an annual report in the Legislative Assembly and, as a result, no reference exists that permits your committee to review the internal operation of the corporation. However, since the Crown's shares in Saskoil are held by Crown Management Board, your committee can avail itself of the opportunities to consider the government's financial involvement in Saskoil.

Your committee elected a new Chairman on April 24, 1986, the member for Cut Knife-Lloydminster, to oversee the operation of your committee.

Mr. Hopfner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Athabasca, Mr. Thompson:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations be now concurred in.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you today, and to the members of the Assembly, 15 grade 8 students that are seated in the Speaker's gallery. And these students attend Benson elementary school, located in my constituency here in Regina. They are accompanied today by Mrs. Mitchell and Dr. Ochitwa. And they have had the opportunity to tour the Legislative Building, and I'm sure that they will find their experience here this afternoon in question period to be very educational.

I look forward to the opportunity of meeting with them for pictures and some refreshments after question period, and I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming these students from Benson elementary school.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to the Assembly, some 43 students from grade 5 and 6 from my constituency in Esterhazy. They come from the Esterhazy East Elementary School. They're seated in the west gallery. With them today are their teachers Bob Unchulenko and Walter Gorkoff, and their bus driver this afternoon is Sharon Gelowitz. I hope you enjoy the proceedings in the Chamber this afternoon, and I hope you enjoyed your tour and the rest of your tour for the day, and a safe trip home.

I'll be happy to meet with you at 3 o'clock for pictures on the stairway out in the rotunda, and I'd like all the members to help me to welcome them to this legislation.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me today to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the Assembly, 17 grade 5 and 6 students from Coderre Elementary School in the village of Coderre, Saskatchewan, which is in my constituency.

They are located in the east gallery today. Their teacher that is accompanying them is Carol Friesen, and they have chaperons, Judy Tremblay, Peggy Tremblay, Chris Patoine, and Vicki Desnoyers, and their bus driver is along, Mr. Jim Smith.

I will be meeting with them after question period for pictures and drinks. I hope that your tour of the legislature today has been of great value to you and something which you will carry on into later life, and also the things which you watch here today will give you a better insight into how your government in Saskatchewan works, and how we, as MLAs try to do the things which you, as taxpayers in this province, like.

I'd like all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Taxing of Livestock Tax Credits by Federal Government

Mr. Engel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question to the Minister of Finance, and can you confirm, Mr. Minister, that your government has lost yet another round of battle with the Mulroney government in Ottawa, and that both the livestock investment tax credit and the livestock facilities tax credit will be considered as taxable benefits by the federal government.

Can you confirm that this is Mulroney's position, and what does your government propose to do to make that decision palatable for farmers?

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Well I gather the hon. member found this out by reading the newspaper because it was taxable income a year ago and came about a year ago as a result of . . . I'm sorry, it was always deemed to be a reimbursement inducement under section 12 of the Income Tax Act in last taxation years. so I give to the hon. member, we have made representation to the Government of Canada for over the last year now to urge that these provisions not be taxable. The federal government has stood by its ruling under section 12(1)(x) of the federal Income Tax Act that they are an inducement and are taxable. So we've made the representations for some considerable period of time. I'm a little surprised you just figured it out.

Mr. Engel: — You know with the position that the federal government is doing nothing wrong, if you look at . . . In the case of a farmer with a \$100,000 building, according to the Leader-Post report, the provincial credit would be \$15,000. But instead of allowing the farmer to claim depreciation on the 100,000, as it would have been before the tax credit, the federal government will now reduce the amount by \$15,000.

My question to you, Mr. Minister: — these provincial tax credits were supposed to be the impetus for Saskatchewan hog producers to expand their herds. But how can these tax credits be a major incentive if every dollar of benefit is going to be taxed by the Mulroney government in Ottawa?

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Well I suppose we're going to have some difficulty of trying to find out which side of the fence you're on. Last year you were against the initiative, period.

An Hon. Member: — Well it's a waste of money.

Hon. Mr. Lane: — That's now . . . Sure. Now you're against it. Now you figure it should be tax deductible. Let me remind the hon. member that this was in place in the previous taxation year.

Secondly, that I believe the number was over some 5,000 farmers — 97 per cent were farmers — had taken advantage of it last year knowing the tax provisions. So for you to stand up and say people won't take advantage of it, obviously you've been wrong for the last year and

one-half. Secondly, you were opposed to it; now you figure it should be taxable. Obviously the people in your riding are having a great deal of difficulty trying to figure which side of the fence you're on and which position you're taking. But certainly this is not new. I suppose they are all out there surprised it took you a year to figure it out.

Thirdly, it's very interesting that the farmers are still taking advantage of the provision, notwithstanding the tax rulings.

Mr. Engel: — You know, final supplement, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to ask this one of the Premier. You like to brag about your special relationship with Brian. If there is a special relationship, why can't you talk to the Prime Minister and convince him that this kind of action by the federal government is not in the best interests of Saskatchewan or Saskatchewan taxpayers? Nine and a half million dollars transferred to the federal treasury is what it is. And if that's the best you can do, why don't you talk to your friend, Brian, and come up with a solution?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentions \$9.5 million with respect to this tax provision. Given the relationship that we have with the Prime Minister, we've picked up about a billion and a half in terms of changes in legislation and cash coming to western Canada and the province of Saskatchewan.

We asked him to take the tax off farm fuel, and he did. We asked him to take the capital gains tax off farm land, and he did. We asked for help in drought or in flood, and he's made the contribution. We've also asked him to freeze the freight rates and freeze the elevator tariffs, and he's done that. We asked him to stop the beef imports when they're coming in. So, Mr. Speaker, I can give a list here for a dozen or more things that are worth hundreds of millions of dollars to the people of Saskatchewan, and you asked about a \$9 million issue that's a year and a half old. As the Minister of Finance said, we don't know what side of the fence you're on.

So I said I will continue to make the representation. And I suspect I would be as successful as anybody sitting on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, and certainly much more successful than anybody sitting on that.

Repeal of Tax on Used Vehicles

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I direct a question to the Minister of Revenue and Financial Services. It concerns the Bill introduced last spring to amend The Education and Health Tax Act, Bill 76, which extended the 5 per cent provincial sales tax to used vehicles.

Nine months later your government admitted that the tax was a mistake and that it was unfair, and you withdrew it. You withdrew it by a press release from the Premier's office. Since your government introduced this tax through legislation, will you, Mr. Minister, be introducing an amendment to The Education and Health Tax Act to repeal this provision of Bill 76 which you enacted at the last session?

Hon. Mr. Morin: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government responded to the wishes of the people,

and we're very proud of doing that. And we have responded to the wishes of the people in taxation in many, many ways by reducing or eliminating the tax on gasoline recently, by eliminating the tax on clothing under \$300.

We've provided many measures through the Minister of Finance to provide an allowance for people to reduce their taxation. And certainly, as it comes to taxation, we are quite prepared to defend our record in taxation against your record, and particularly your record in refunding money to people, to widows and orphans, under succession duty in which you collected \$28 million at a time of death, a time of bereavement within a family — when you refunded not one penny, not one nickel. When you forced farmers to sell off parts of their farm in order to pay that tax; small business to sell their family business, their livelihood, to pay that tax, and we will defend our record of taxation with the people anywhere in this province, sir.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, with a minister who is unwilling to answer a simple question as to whether you're going to take a tax off the books, but has to go back 10 or 15 years, it's not surprising that this government is totally afraid to call an election, has run away from an election . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — . . . because it is having to look back . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order. order! If the member has a question, I'll take the question, but the member is making statements rather than asking questions.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I am making a statement in answer to the debate of the hon. member, which was equally out of order — equally out of order.

Mr. Speaker: — Does the member have a question?

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — I have a question. The question is this, and it's the same as the first one, same as the first time, and it's this: — do you propose to bring in legislation to take that sales tax on used cars and trucks off the books, or do you intend to leave it on the books so you can reimpose it by a simple statement from the Premier?

Hon. Mr. Morin: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member talks about reimposing taxes, and I would challenge him that when he was in North Battleford talking to the council up there, he indicated to that council that he believed in a sales tax and that a NDP government in this province would either reimpose the sales tax, raise the sales tax, or both.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province know full well our record on taxation: — no tax on power bills, no tax on utilities, no tax on clothing. They have not had to sell their farming business to pay a death tax and, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite will find out in the near future . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. The member is not answering the question but rather covering a lot of other topics. That's why I asked for order.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, may I ask one other question. Is it your intention to leave that law on the books which will allow you to reintroduce that tax at any time? That is a fairly simple question. A lot of people are wondering whether you're going to reintroduce the tax. They're wondering why you aren't taking it off. Will you be introducing legislation which will take this tax off the books, and if so, when may we expect it?

Hon. Mr. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A lot of people are wondering if they will be reintroducing taxes if they ever form the government.

An Hon. Member: — Answer the question.

Hon. Mr. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, if the NDP opposition will be quiet for a moment, I'll be happy to answer the question.

Mr. Speaker, we will be seeing legislation in this House in the very near future to repeal that particular amendment. And, Mr. Speaker, it's well-known in the general public that that tax has not been paid for a good long time in this province since the Premier announced that it would be removed. And that is very consistent with lower and lower taxation of a number of different commodities, and at all levels across this province, because of the actions of this government — very much in contrast to their actions.

Mr. Sveinsson: — We all know, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP ran the highest tax administration in the history of this province.

My question to the minister is: — are there any more surprises for the people of Saskatchewan with respect to the 5 per cent sales tax before we go to the polls, and can we expect a reduction in that sales tax as your government committed to prior to the 1982 election?

Hon. Mr. Morin: — Well, thank you. The member is quite accurate when he says that the NDP were the highest taxing administration in the history of the province. We've tried to correct that, as the member well knows. As the member well knows, we've tried to correct that, and we've had major success in correcting that and lowering the overall tax burden to the people of the province. And anything that we will be doing in the future to reduce the level of taxation to the people across the province will be announced in due course, and I'm sure you'll be quite happy with it.

Hiring Practices of the Public Service Commission

Mr. Sveinsson: — New question, Mr. Speaker, and it's to the minister in charge of the Public Service commission. It's come to my attention recently through several

constituents that the hiring practices of your government, from the janitor right through to the chairman of the board, are based on a colour-coding scheme. A lady who, in fact, applied for a job with your dental program, after acceptance by the department was informed that her application was turned down because her son, of all things, was an NDPer.

The first question I ask you is: Mr. Minister, how many Koskies are left working for your government, and is this practice of firing people who do not, in fact, believe in your own philosophies; does it run rampant through your government, and do you support it?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — No, Mr. Speaker, I believe in a very professional approach to the hiring of people to work for the civil service here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Sveinsson: — Supplementary to the question. I would like to remind you that with respect to job applications, whether it was anywhere within the civil service . . . I would like to suggest to you that the question was asked: — what is the political philosophy of the applicant. And without question, I have answered that question many times saying that it doesn't really matter. I believe the job is what is important, and I want that individual working whether they are an NDP, a WCC, or a conservative. Does your government still colour-code all applicants? I think you, in fact, know what I am talking about, Mr. Minister. And if that is the case, do you agree with it, and has it happened recently in the department of dental services in the province?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a substantial difference, I believe, between the hiring practices today and those of the former administration. And I did bring to the attention of the members of the Assembly . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I did bring to the attention of the members of the Assembly some time back, Mr. Speaker, a good example of six or seven members of the NDP member from Quill Lakes that were hired under the former NDP administration. That is not the practice of this government.

We believe, I believe, that there should be a professional approach to the hiring of those people who want to work in the civil service here in the province of Saskatchewan, and I'm not particularly concerned what political stripe they come from. What is important is that the people of Saskatchewan are served competently, professionally, and efficiently. That is what I believe; that is the practice of the Public Service Commission, Mr. Speaker, under my direction.

Mr. Speaker: — Final supplementary.

Mr. Sveinsson: — Within the structure of job applications, Mr. Minister, what's Harvey Rothecker's function? And does he determine these people are colour-coded properly to hire these individuals within your public service?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Speaker, I was not able to hear the question from the member opposite because of the noise coming from the NDP benches. If he would like to repeat the question, I'll attempt to respond to it.

Mr. Sveinsson: — Simple question: — what is the role of Harvey Rothecker, a member of Executive Council, in determining who works for your Public Service commission in this province?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not responsible for members who work for Executive Council. I'm not familiar with the particular responsibilities of the individual that the member opposite has referred to. There are literally thousands of people who work for the civil service here in the province of Saskatchewan, and I don't know their particular responsibilities or duties as individuals.

So as I indicated that member does not work for my particular Public Service Commission that I'm responsible for. I don't know which particular department he may or may not be working for.

Refund of Tax on Used Vehicles

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to address my question to the Minister of Revenue and Financial Services on the same issue that my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, was raising, and that is the unfairness of the used vehicle tax. I want to ask you, Mr. Minister, have you been receiving a number of letters similar to what we have been receiving of concerned citizens in respect to the unfairness of this tax? And may I just quote in part from a couple of letters, Mr. Speaker, a letter from Martensville which reads, in part:

Taking the tax off a few months after it was introduced represents a change of rules in the middle of the game, something which is universally recognized as being unfair. Had we known the tax would be lifted we naturally would have waited to buy a vehicle.

Another family from Prince Albert, Mr. Minister, writes:

So, Mr. Devine, all I can say to you is if you can't see your way clear to correct your mistake and pay back the \$860 tax we paid unfairly, then I will never be able to support your government, and there are many, many more that feel the same way.

I ask you, Mr. Minister, can the minister explain to these people why he thinks that he has treated these people fairly in respect to the non-repayment of the tax which was unfair in the first place?

Hon. Mr. Morin: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order please. I'm going to ask for order in the House. There's just so much commotion that you can't be heard here.

Hon. Mr. Morin: — Thank you. I would encourage the

member to table those letters. Unfortunately, I just went through my dossier here, and I don't have a letter with me that I received in my office this morning from an individual who said: — frankly, I paid tax when I bought a used vehicle, and I don't want it back. I think this is a politically motivated footfraw caused by the opposition, he said. And he said, I recognize that tax dollars from that source go into the general revenue, and they pay for schools and hospitals and a number of other things around the province.

And he just basically aid that he thought that was fair and reasonable, and that he expected to live under the tax régime of the day, and he was quite prepared to do that. And I've received a number of those letters . . .

An Hon. Member: — Table that letter.

Hon. Mr. Morin: — I'll be happy to table that letter, the member from Shaunavon says. I'll be happy to table that letter. If I had it here with me today, I'd table it today. But I will make this undertaking. I will table it tomorrow, and I'm prepared to table my letters. I don't know if they're prepared to table theirs, because mine are legitimate, Mr. Speaker, and they don't come from NDP candidates around the province, they don't come from NDP organizers around the province, and they don't come from highly placed NDP family members around the province.

Mr. Koskie: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the minister. Mr. Minister, I want to ask you about another letter which was sent to our Premier by a retired couple in Moose Jaw, and I read, in part. And they've asked us to draw it to the attention of the legislature, the unfairness of the tax . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I said new question, not supplementary.

Here is an elderly couple, and they say in their letter:

After saving for many years for an almost new car to start our retirement years, we are burdened with yet another tax. After great deliberation, our car was purchased and the sales tax was paid, if somewhat grudgingly. A few weeks later this same tax was removed. Now we are faced with yet another decision and more deliberation in this household. Do we keep voting for this government? Will they do the right thing and refund the tax, or must we look to another party to give our vote to at the next election?

Mr. Minister, I ask you: will your government do the right thing to these people, or will you continue to compound the unfairness. Will you, in fact, refund this unfair tax that they had to pay?

Hon. Mr. Morin: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to use the question period here every day to read letters back and forth, tomorrow I will bring the file of letters that I've received from widows and orphans who paid an unfair succession duty, a death tax administered by that government, and I will begin reading them back into the record.

I have received letters from people who tell me: we had to

sell our farm, parts of our farm, to pay succession duty, and that sale meant that it was no longer a viable unit. I have received letters from people who said: — we had to sell part or our entire small business which had been in our family for two or three generations to pay succession duty.

Mr. Speaker, there was \$28 million worth of letters received from people who had to pay that unfair tax. And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to eliminate and lower taxes, whether they're income taxes which have been lowered, as my colleague from Regina South outlined very, very well yesterday; whether it's removal of tax on clothing; whether it's removal of tax on gas; whether it's removal of tax on utility bills, or any of a number of a litany of tax reductions and tax equities that we can point to on this side of the House that those members opposite never even dreamed of, because all that they could think to do was tax you till you could hardly even survive in this province. And their only vision is them, with a bagful of money, walking around being able to purchase ever more Crown corporations to put big government ever more in control.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Crude Oil Seepage into Lake Athabasca

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I direct my question to the Minister of the Environment, and it deals with the major oil spill on Lake Athabasca near Uranium City.

In view of the extremely hot weather that we've been having in northern Saskatchewan, and the high winds, could the minister indicate that the slick from the crude oil spill has now been blown from the docks at Bushell Bay and out into the main lake where it poses a threat to the commercial fishing industry. Can the minister give us an explanation as to how this happened when you assured the Assembly just a few days ago that the clean-up was under way and would be completed soon?

Hon. Mr. Embury: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I take the alleged facts from the member opposite not at face value. I will check those facts and bring back an update on that problem tomorrow.

When we went through this debate previously, we have found that member opposite's facts were not facts. And so I will check what he has alleged today, and I will bring back an answer tomorrow.

Mr. Thompson: — Supplementary, Mr. Minister, when you bring that answer back, can you also tell the Assembly how much oil is yet to be cleaned up and when you expect the clean-up to be completed? Also, does your department see any threat to the nearby community of Camsell Portage?

Hon. Mr. Embury: — As I said, Mr. Speaker, I am not at all sure that the facts alleged today are in fact the facts, so I will check with my department today and I will bring back an answer tomorrow.

Lack of Answers to Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lingenfelter: — My question is directed to the House Leader, and it deals with the fact that we are now on day 50 of this session and still the government has failed to answer a number of questions that have been on the order paper for almost 50 years.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the House Leader can tell the Saskatchewan government when your government will finally be answering the following questions, the ones that have been on the order paper for a couple of years: — the government's former arrangement with the former PC candidate, one Terry Leier, an individual you may know; the money paid out to various law firms by government departments and Crown corporations.

Another question that has been there for some time, the out-of-province travel expenses of cabinet ministers, such as the Premier and the former minister of Economic Development and Trade.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, can you inform us when we might expect an answer to those and other questions that have been on the order paper?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I'm going from memory, Mr. Speaker, but I think that's sometimes dangerous. But I think, obviously, everybody will be aware that the opposition ran out of questions so he had to dig back for one and recycle it.

The fact is, that question, Mr. Speaker, was asked of my deputy some time ago, and he answered in the following way, I believe. I think he said that there was something like 302, or thereabouts, questions addressed to this government in written form or by way of return in the four years since 1982 when we took office. All but 19 I'm told, and there may be even less than that now, were answered to that date.

Now, I apologize . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . None of them were ever passed either, Mr. Speaker, they were questions . . . The member for Regina North West is talking about questions that for the most part died on the order paper, so I don't know how he can legitimately complain about that. Had he been sitting in the House on private members' day so he could have moved those questions into an order for return, naturally we would have answered them. But he wasn't here then, Mr. Speaker; he's not here a whole lot these days, Mr. Speaker, and . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please.

STATEMENT

Death of Member for Kinistino

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I would, with leave of the House, like to rise and acknowledge the untimely passing of one of the members of our legislature.

I am profoundly saddened by the tragic death of Mr. Ben Boutin, who was the member of the legislature for Kinistino.

Ben was a young man, 33 years old, going about his routine work as a farmer. His accident could have happened to any one of us that work with large machinery. Ben spent his last four years working for the people of Kinistino as a member of the legislature, and he left his mark on Saskatchewan.

I remember his nomination well, Mr. Speaker. I didn't know that we would have very many people turn up at this particular nomination. And Ben Boutin decided to seek the position and run, and there was about 500 people showed up, and most of them were his relatives.

He was a very, very strong advocate of our senior citizens and our farmers, and worked hard on their behalf. He made a valuable contribution to our caucus, particularly on agricultural policy because he was intimately involved in the farming and agricultural scene. I grew to rely on his advice about rural people and about seniors, and I relied on him not only as a member of the legislature, but indeed as a friend.

Ben was a straight-shooter. He was a very compassionate individual and spoke for what he believed in. He was a kind of individual that wore his heart on his sleeve. He had a great love for life and a great love for his wife and his children, and for his friends, and obviously for the people of Saskatchewan and the people of the area of Kinistino.

But his first priority, Mr. speaker, was his family and his farm, and he had decided not to seek re-election to devote more time to those priorities. And all I would like to say today, Mr. Speaker, is that on behalf of the government, I wish to extend my deepest sympathy to his wife Lucie, to their five children, and to all his family, and say that we sincerely share in their sorrow.

Formal condolence motions will be made tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. And for those that may want to attend the funeral, it's Friday morning at 10 a.m. in Domremy.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I know I and other Hon. Members will want to say something further on the occasion of the formal condolences. But on this first opportunity, I would like to join with the Premier in recognizing the work and in mourning the passing of the member for Kinistino, Ben Boutin.

It's always a matter of a good deal of sadness when a sitting member of the legislature passes from our midst. But in this case I think it's particularly unfortunate, particularly untimely, that a person of Ben Boutin's age — still in his early 30s — is killed, and therefore leaves his family, a young family, without the guidance of a husband and a father.

He was, as I indicated, a young man whose political career was short and had not had a full opportunity to make his mark. He had indicated, I think, that he was not proposing to run at the next election, but held his options open to run at a subsequent one when his farm was fully established and when his family was somewhat older.

His death was untimely in the extreme. My colleagues and I join with the Premier in extending sympathy to Mrs.

Boutin, to the five children, and to all other members of the Boutin family.

MOTIONS

House Adjournment

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day and with leave of the Assembly, I move, seconded by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade:

That when this Assembly adjourns on Thursday, May 29, 1986, it do stand adjourned until Monday, June 2, 1986.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Education Ordinary Expenditure - Vote 8

Mr. Chairman: — Before we begin the estimates for the Department of Education I would ask the minister to please introduce her officials.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my immediate right today I have the deputy minister of Saskatchewan Education, Dr. Rod Wickstrom; and to his right I have Mr. Jack Lloyd who is the executive director of finance and administration; and seated behind me I have the two associate deputies, Mr. Brian Ward and Mr. Steven Pillar. And other officials will be joining us as is required.

(1445)

Before getting into some questions from my hon. colleagues across the way, Mr. Chairman. I would simply like to say that it has been an extremely busy and satisfying year in Education. And we look forward to another busy year as we progress into the second year of the education development fund and some of the exciting things that we haven't been involved in, including seeking solutions for various problems that always seem to crop up with us.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to any questions that the opposition may have.

Item 1

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a number of questions that I will want to pursue with the minister during the consideration of these estimates, dealing with funding for education, the questions of dealing with the core curriculum, the Directions report, the state of . . . or the methods employed by the government in negotiations with teachers for teachers' salaries and working conditions, and so on.

But I want to begin this afternoon, Madam Minister, with a question which I asked in the House yesterday in question period, and it has to do with the teachers' superannuation commission and the teachers' superannuation fund.

I note that in the estimates there is a provision where the Department of Education funds the administration of the teachers' superannuation fund. And therefore, Madam Minister, you do have some particular responsibility in this field. But as well as that, you have a specific responsibility, and I understand that, because you are the Minister of Education. You deal not only with school boards, but you deal with teachers as well.

And it has come to my attention, in growing numbers, that there is some concern about recent changes that have been brought about by the government with the teachers' superannuation commission, regulations as well as a change in policy as it applies to what you do with earnings of the teachers' superannuation fund.

Madam Minister, can you tell me if there has been a change recently, particularly with the initiation of this budget for this coming fiscal year, or this fiscal year? Has there been a change in a policy as to the utilization of excess earnings in the teachers' superannuation fund?

Madam Minister, can you tell me if there has been a change recently, particularly with the initiation of this budget for this coming fiscal year, or this fiscal year? Has there been a change in a policy as to the utilization of excess earnings in the teachers' superannuation fund? And in excess earnings, I mean earnings above 7 per cent. Has there been a change in that policy which now makes it different than it was last year, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well simply, no, Mr. Chairman, I'm familiar with the member from Regina North East question. yesterday the Acting Minister of Education was kind enough to take it. And he also stated that there had been no change in policy. And I will state it very clearly again: — there is no change in policy.

I would however like to point out to the member, as I read through *Hansard*, and some of the statements that he had to say in regards to the question, some of it is simply not true. You did state that this government had changed the policy this year by not budgeting or showing a budgeted figure in terms of excess earnings over that 7 per cent.

Well when I go back and look at the figures, I want to remind the member, who through those times had an opportunity as minister of Finance and as a minister of Education then, that for example in 1978 the fund was earning 9 per cent, and you contributed 6 per cent. By the year 1981, that fund was earning on interest, 10.67, and you contributed 7 per cent.

So to stand in this House yesterday and to say there is a precedent being set is totally false, totally. There is no precedent in this. The moneys have been put in, and as you allude to the 7 per cent, I also want to point out to you that over and above that 7 per cent it is not unusual to find further dollars put in through capital gains from the fund. For example, when we became government in '82-83, 25 million was put in on the capital gains portion that was over and above the 7 per cent of the interest earned; 1985 was 21.5; the two years before that was 16 million. So to come back to the very simple answer to your question: — no, the policy has not changed, and in fact we had made a commitment as we go along to try and get to a point where that unfunded liability would be much more manageable.

And I think we've done reasonably well in four years.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, are you saying that in this fiscal year you are not taking 100 per cent of the excess earnings, about 70 per cent, out of the teachers' superannuation fund and applying it to existing payments for existing superannuation pensions? Are you saying you're not taking 100 per cent of the excess earnings in this year?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Chairman, we are recognizing the excess earnings. What doesn't show up in the book . and if the member had been listening he would have heard me say the word "capital gains," and that is what is not budgeted in the figures.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, either I'm not making my question clear or you're not answering the question. The superannuation fund has earnings because it is invested, obviously. Those earnings over 7 per cent, are you saying that you're not taking the earnings above 7 per cent — the excess earnings above 7 per cent — out of the fund and using them to pay for superannuates' pensions, existing superannuates' pensions? Now that was my simple question.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — I can only repeat my previous answer. Yes, we do recognize those excess earnings. What you are not seeing or recognizing is the capital gains. And for example, in the fiscal year '85-86 there was \$21.5 million extra that was gained through what the superannuation calls capital gains. That was over and above the earnings.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Can you explain, minister, what you mean by the words you use, "we recognize excess earnings." What do you mean by that?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well this particular topic, Mr. Chairman, could very well take a long time because I don't pretend to be an expert in terms of pension plans, and I would doubt if the member opposite is either.

We have not taken any moneys out, as you have alluded to. The moneys have not been taken out; they have remained within the fund. What you find this year, with the changing interest rate markets and investment markets, is a lowering. For an example — and I gave you one of the years previous — the year 1981, interest rates were running around 10 per cent. Now you credited at that time — and I say you, because you were in power — credited the account with 7 per cent. I might very well ask you the same question today: — what on earth did you do with the extra 3.67 per cent?

It's a fair question. It's a fair question. If you want to make this a straight political issue, then we can approach it that way. And I will simply say that you are misconstruing the actual facts and the actual figures in looking for a political issue, my good friend, that isn't there.

Now you're talking about how to invest moneys, how they're put back in — revenues, expenditures, market values, interest rates, investments, the whole ball game. If

you want to talk that, we'll talk that. If you want to talk to the straight politics of it, well I guess that's your prerogative, if that's what you choose to do with such an issue.

As I said before, there's been no money taken out of it as was suggested in this House yesterday. And in fact we have more, over the last four years, more than put in the minimum requirement. And I will go over those figures again: — in '82-83, we put in an extra 25 million; in 1983-84, 16.9 million; '84-85 was 16.8 million; '85-86 was 21.5 million.

Now the issue this year is because we did not budget any kind of an amount in terms of capital gains in the blue book. And there were some reasons for that; interest rates have come down. We don't know if there's going to be a whole lot over that 7 per cent. You could very well find at the end of the year that the investments were better than what they initially thought when the budget was drawn up. But at this point in time, what we have in there is the minimum requirement.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, you may want to think only in terms of opposition members raising these issues as a matter of politics. I want to tell you that the teachers of this province are extremely concerned about what you have done in this year with the teachers' superannuation fund. And I would hope that you would not stand up in the House and simply say, when teachers become concerned about education or about a superannuation fund to which they contribute, that somehow they're getting political. You may want to think that, Madam Minister. I don't think that.

As a matter of fact, last night in this city of Regina there was a meeting, a regular general meeting, of the teachers who happen to work, in this case, for the separate school system. And there was a long debate. I wasn't at the meeting, but I spoke to people who were. There was a long debate about changes you have made to what you do with excess earnings in the teachers' superannuation fund. As a matter of fact, a resolution of some firmness, I might add, was passed expressing concern and asking that something be done by the council and the executive of the STF with regard to this issue.

Just to bring it into focus, Madam Minister, I will read you what the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation has reported to the councillors, the presidents, the chairmen of the LINC (Local Implementation and Negotiation Committee) committees, and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation staff reps. And then when I have finished reading it to you, Madam Minister, I want to ask you whether you would want to say whether this is an accurate assessment by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, or whether it is in error.

And it states the following:

Recent changes in government policy related to allocating interest earnings to the superannuation fund has caused the federation to raise some concern with the Minister of Finance.

The government has the legislative responsibility

to provide the following minimal support: (1) guarantee the superannuation payroll; (2) match teacher contributions (and that only began in 1980); (3) maintain the minimum fund balance, which is the total of all teacher contributions, together with the credited interest, and all government contributions, together with credited interest. Interest is currently credited at the rate of 7 per cent and provided in the 1979 provincial collective bargaining agreement (and that's probably the play on words that you're trying to make here).

And then it goes on to say:

In recent years the provincial support has usually exceeded the legislative minimum support required by adding the interest earnings in excess of 7 per cent to the fund.

(1500)

As a matter of fact, you may correct me on this, but I think last year it was something like 64 per cent of the excess was retained in the fund. And then it goes on to say:

We are concerned with the government's decision to only fund the minimum requirements for 1986 - 87, when in fact estimates for '86-87 indicate earnings of the fund well in excess of the 7 per cent minimum allocation required.

Madam Minister, is this an accurate statement by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Chairman, I'm well aware of the concern that teachers have had for many, many years over the unfunded liability. I'm also aware of the resolutions, one coming out of STF council. I am not aware of a particular resolution that may have come out of a meeting last night.

The statement is inaccurate, Mr. Member from Regina North East, in terms of the first statement on the policy being changed. That is not true. The policy has not changed. I've given you the figures dating right back to 1978 and the next two years up to 1980 when the agreement was more formalized. And at that time the policy was one of the minimum requirements. And I have given you the interest earned and interest credited in your years of power, plus into '82 - 83, to show that in fact that policy has not changed.

The policy is also one of, when you can and if it's possible and you have received back more than what you budgeted for, you may very well, in a good year, put more money into that unfunded liability than you did the year before, or maybe the next year. This year, with interest rates coming down, you will probably see a lesser amount than what you saw last year and the year before. I don't think that's difficult to understand.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, can you tell me what the policy was last year? Can you tell me how much of the excess earnings were retained in the fund last year?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Last year the figure was \$21.4 million retained.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, we're going to be here a long time if you continue to refuse to answer the questions, and that's what you're doing here today. Now I wish you would get to the topic here and answer the questions rather than talking around them. The question is: — how much of the excess earnings was \$21 million? How much, in percentage terms, of the excess earnings were retained in the fund?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — First of all, let's not get into a lecturing point, and don't patronize me with your teacher attitude in here. Okay? This is not a class-room. This is not a class-room, and I'm not the student.

Mr. Chairman, the figure would work out to \$21.4 million, almost 21.5. It would be 52.1 million over 21.4.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — So you're saying that some of the excess earnings — and according to the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, about 64 per cent of the excess earnings were retained in the superannuation fund last year. Am I correct in that?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — It's a little over 60 per cent. But the main point of it all is that the policy hasn't changed.

An Hon. Member: — That's not the point.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Yes, that precisely is the point because you levied in this House an accusation that the policy had been changed. And I'm telling you today, no, the policy has not been changed.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, how much of the excess earnings are you going to retain in the fund this year?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — That is going to depend on what happens over the year in terms of interest rates. The blue book is an estimate. You could conceivably end up with some, but we have not estimated that that, in fact, is going to happen on the capital gains — the capital gains.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, will you listen to this then? There was a letter that was sent to the Hon. Gary Lane, the Minister of Finance, dated May 2, 1986 — not so long ago — and I'm sure you read it. And it states in the letter:

Your government has moved from a position of retaining approximately 64 per cent of the excess interest earnings in the superannuation fund to the current '87 - 87 position of retaining none of the excess earnings in the fund.

Further to that letter, there was a meeting that was held with the Minister of Finance, initiated by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, in which the Minister of Finance agreed that that indeed is what was happening.

How can you stand up, Madam Minister, and deny that 100 per cent of the excess earnings are not going to be

removed from the fund when your own Minister of Finance has stated that it's going to be removed for this year?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we are in fact recognizing 100 per cent of the earnings. We are recognizing that. The figure is \$44 million. That's the budget for this year. Like, I . . . the capital gains is what we seem to be able to not to understand, between the member from Regina North East and myself. You could conceivably end up with a substantial amount earned over the year under your capital gains that you had not budgeted for. Is that understandable?

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, it's now 44 million. Well, I'm glad to know that I wasn't wrong when I raised the question yesterday, and from the information I had, it was 30 million, I thought. But certainly it is, in your own words . . . well, isn't it 44 million? Isn't that what you just said? Please correct me if I'm wrong.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, first of all, are you not talking about another year? And does it not say in your Estimates book under the year 1986-87, is there not a figure mid-way down that says \$44.128 million?

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Madam Minister, what you have said here today really confirms — although you have been trying to avoid it in your way — confirms what the concern is out there. The teachers' superannuation fund has had a very large unfunded liability. We're all aware of that. It's something that existed, not only in that fund, but a lot of superannuation funds that were initiated in an era 50 or 60 years ago when circumstances economically, when the rates of inflation, when the whole demographic projections were different than they are now.

The members opposite keep chirping from their seats. I want to tell the member opposite that the teachers' superannuation plan started a long time before even the past NDP government was in power. And those plans across Canada, I might add, those plans across Canada worked on the premise and on the belief that as people superannuated, there would be enough new, younger working people in that profession, or part of that working group, that would be able to make contributions to the plan and, therefore, be able to sustain the payments that would have to be made to superannuates.

The reality of it is that all that has changed. We had years of rates of inflation that no one thought would ever be possible 50 years ago — 30 years ago. And so that has skewed that logic and those actuarial projections that were made when these plans were established. And so what has had to happen is that some of these plans, and the way that they are organized, have had to change. And in 1980 that change was made. And it happened to have been made when the New Democratic Party was in power. I'm not suggesting that it wouldn't have been made if some other party had been in power. The fact is, at that point in time somebody had to finally take the bull by the horns and do something about it.

And so now we have a plan in which there are not only contributions by teachers, or, in other plans, by other

employees, but we have a plan to which the government even contributes a matching amount — as it should be; the employer should contribute. I wish more of the private plans were as good as this one.

Now when we here have an opportunity to do something about the unfunded liability, and that is by retaining the excess earnings in the fund so that they could be part of even your so-called capital gain — if that's the term you want to use — so that it could accumulate in the fund and earn more revenue, you are turning the clock back, and you are saying, no, we're not going to do anything about this funded liability because the Minister of Finance has a little problem. The Minister of Finance, and the minister before him, on behalf of this cabinet, decided that they were going to bring this province into a debt and a deficit situation which, equally, no one thought was ever going to be possible.

Now that they're faced with this problem, they're prepared to take any kinds of moneys that they can lay their hands on to help their cause. So instead of trying to do something about this unfunded liability, you have decided in this fiscal year, in this budget which we are considering, not to retain any excess earnings of the superannuation fund in the plan, and I say to you, Madam Minister, that's wrong.

And the past may have had other kinds of examples where things were done differently; that's not the point. The point is you are the government today, and you are the minister today, and you are responsible today. And this action, I submit to you, is irresponsible. And so do 11,000 teachers say to you, it's irresponsible; and I might add, so do the trustees of this province say it's irresponsible because the trustees of this province say it's irresponsible because the trustees, too, are concerned about the unfunded liability.

Now I ask you Madam Minister: — in light of the fact that we have this unfunded liability in the teacher's superannuation fund, why would you not consider — and I'm not . . . you personally, I'm talking about your government — why would you not consider it prudent to leave the excess money that is earned, and by that we mean anything over 7 per cent in the fund in this year, and into the future, so that you could do something with the funded liability. Would you not consider that to be a prudent move?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — First of all, Mr. Chairman, I want to go on record as saying that this is not a step backwards. And to stand here today and hear the member from Regina North East indicate that this is a step backwards is hypocritical; there's no other word for it.

And let me go over again why I say that. I mean, I'm actually . . . I can't believe my ears. And I'm also rather disappointed that he ignores. Yes, he's right; we've only just begun. Let's hope he sticks around for the finish. He says this is a step backwards. And he says, it's not you personally; it's your government. Well we're one and the same.

(1515)

In 1978 the government of the day decided after many,

many, many years to do something about a very serious unfunded liability with teacher's pensions. I'm sure at that time the member was concerned because he was ... did in fact come from a teaching profession. I also know the trustees were also concerned because I came from that background, and we were concerned about the security of pension plans for the teachers. The unfunded liability portion in my mind at that time did, in fact, not represent a secure pension for teachers that had served their time in the school system. So by the time it came to 1980 they were, in fact, ready to sit down and talk about how government was going to address the unfunded liability portion. And two things happened, Mr. Chairman, at that time.

First of all the government of the day went to the bargaining table and they bargained and they negotiated and they came up with what was called an annuity plan for the teachers. And in fact, that had to be one of the phases in order to address the unfunded liability portion for the future.

Now there was, as I recall, great discussion around the province in '78 and '79 leading up to that final decision in 1980. For at that time the teachers — and some still are today — were on what was called the formula plan. And in fact it was probably considered one of the best in North America, but it did not recognize some realities in terms of society, what was happening with pensions — the unfunded liability portions of them. So therefore, the government of the day took it to the negotiating table and somehow were successful in negotiating with the teachers to accept the annuity plan.

Now it's interesting to note in 1986 and 1986 . . . I've heard rumblings from the member opposite that oh, they think they would like to go back to the formula plan. Well they change it one year, and five years later they're saying let's do something else with it.

However, what they did in 1980 did, in fact, put into place some possible solutions in addressing the unfunded liability. And one was that there was a guarantee put in of minimum amounts of money — a guarantee for minimum amounts to be added to the fund as it went along, so it simply wasn't a pay-out every year. There was some extra going in there, and that eventually they would get to a point where they would be caught up with it. Now besides that minimum there was also an understanding that where possible they would, in fact, put more in.

Now what's interesting to me today is the member from Regina North East stands in here and says, why haven't you done it. And I've given him the figures. When he was minister of Finance, the NDP — Blakeney's government — was earning 10 per cent, 9 per cent, and putting in 6 per cent. And now he says to me, why didn't you put in more than the seven — that we've changed the policy. Well the policy has not changed.

I will say, Mr. Chairman, that it is wise when and where possible that the government does, in fact, pay attention to that unfunded liability, and when and where possible put in any kinds of capital gains that they may, in fact, have in a particular year out of the fund.

Mr. Chairman, we have done that in the last four years. And we did that in a four-year period when the economy was sluggish, slow. There was great demand on the social side of government programs. And yet we found 25 million, 16, 16 and another 21 of capital gains to put into that unfunded liability portion, in a time when money was not in excess.

Now if I compare that to the four years previous to that when supposedly we lived in very affluent times, where was the money going? Well I can only assume, and I would say to the member from Regina North East, you know, maybe the extra 3 per cent between the 10 and 7 in 1980 helped to buy a uranium mine or a potash mine or the good Lord only knows what else may have been bought with it, and not a dime going into the unfunded liability portion with it.

Mr. Chairman, we will continue to remain committed to guaranteeing, abiding by the legislation that is in place, and working toward some solutions in terms of that unfunded liability portion that sooner or later down the road will have to be met. It can't be met all at once; it's too big. We're talking something over a billion dollars. The member isn't going to fix that in one year, nor is he going to fix it in four years. And he knows that, because he's been minister of Finance. So if he would just quit playing some games and get down to some good, honest questions, I would be more than pleased to deal with them.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, just to correct the minister, who said that only 6 per cent was left in the fund in certain previous years. I don't know how that's possible when the legislative requirement is 7 per cent. Certainly I think the minister would not suggest that somehow that legislative requirement was broken, because she knows very well that was not the case.

I guess I'm not going to pursue this further at this time, Madam Minister. But I do want to say this: — that the reason why the teachers ... (inaudible interjection) ... Do I have the floor, Mr. Chairman, or does the member from Saskatoon Mayfair have the floor? Thank you very much.

The reason that the teachers are concerned, and trustees are becoming concerned as well, is because of the attitude of this government and the uncertainty about what the government will do from day to day and year to year. Because the government does not have any particular scheme about where it is heading at any particular time. We've had the announcement of five-year plans that lasted exactly five months. Now we have the case where last year in the fund was retained 64 per cent of the excess earnings, and this year it is being proposed by the Minister of Finance not to retain any of the excess earnings. And I don't make that argument. I only say what the Minister of Finance said. And if the Minister of Finance means something else, I wish he would issue a statement so that those people who are worried about this could understand that he has changed his mind, or that he made a mistake, or whatever the situation is, and clarify the issue and clarify the whole question, if that's the case.

I'm not even going to ask you the question: — I will only

suggest to you, Madam Minister, that you should suggest to your Minister of Finance to clear this up, and instead of leaving people who have, in all sincerity, come to meet with him to raise this issue, leaving them with really quite unsatisfactory answers, state to them that indeed excess earnings in the fund will be retained this year.

There is no one that raised more of an issue about the whole question of unfunded liability than the Conservative Party. The member from Rosthern led the fray. And I respect his concern. But having raised those issues time and time again, surely it is then only reasonable for us to be able to expect a government to deliver, at least in some small measure, on those concerns. And yes, last year you did, you retained 64 per cent; this year, according to the Minister of Finance you're not going to, because you're not going to retain any. That's why the concern is out there.

And I suppose over the years people have not been awfully concerned about it because, as I indicated earlier, it is a requirement of the government — funded by the taxpayer I might add — to meet the pension payments that superannuates get. That's an obligation of the government. But when this kind of flip-flopping takes place, I'm sure that people who are superannuates, and who may be superannuates, or will be superannuates in the future, become concerned even to the extent that they're not sure that any government who would flip-flop around to this extent might not change that obligation in some way. That's quite a legitimate concern. And that's why there are meetings behind held around the province in which resolutions are being passed which are asking the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation to press the government to change this policy. That's one of the issues.

The other issue is the desire by teachers — and I agree with you that in the negotiations there was a new pension plan, superannuation plan that initiated. It was agreed to by teachers and the government of the day and the trustees of the day, as it should be. That's the way pension plans should change, through the negotiation process in this particular place. That's what the legislation provides for.

I don't think it's unfair of teachers now to say: — look, we'd like to re-negotiate, and we'd like to go back to the formula plan. Now that should be settled at the bargaining table, and all it takes is a willingness of the government to discuss that particular question. I don't expect us to negotiate here in the Chamber, obviously. I'm not a negotiator, and neither are you, Minister.

But I want to ask you: — is your government prepared to negotiate changes to the superannuation plan based on the concerns that are being expressed by the teachers?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, he's right. For obvious reasons we're not going to negotiate in the House. While the member admits to not being a negotiator, he can only speak for himself, and I would remind him of that.

I . . . Flip-flop — that's amazing. Two minutes ago you talked about government not knowing where it's going, and no long-term plans; and flip-flop . . . (inaudible)

interjection) . . . Flip-flop, the member from Quill Lakes says. That's about the only intelligible thing he's said in a week's time.

You want to talk about who is looking through rose-coloured glasses. I will give the Regina member some direction. There's been no flip-flop by this government as there is by the member from Regina North East, and we know precisely where we want to go with education and take education, Mr. Chairman.

We know when we came into power we made a commitment to increase the provincial share of operating grants, and we've stuck to that. And we have also, my good friend, stuck to the legal obligation on the teachers' superannuation fund — a point which you fail to recognize in this House. If the member wants to know further which direction we're going, I think the education development fund has clearly spelled that out. And that is not a short term, my friend. That is five-year, good, long-term planning. And I would suspect that the member perhaps will not like to get into it. I can only hope that he will, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, can you . . . I'm still on the superannuation, but I want to ask you a different question, although not totally unrelated.

Have there been changes recently, like say in the last year or two years, to the superannuation — either legislation, at a time when I was not in the House, or regulations — which have changed the eligibility provisions for new people who happen to be working in the teaching force or the department or what not? Have there been changes in regulations? And if so, can I get a copy?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — I will be pleased to supply the member with a copy of the regulations. I'm pleased to also inform him that in fact there are some changes, and that is the clean 30 year and out, which teachers have waited for for a long time. And any other changes in regulations to do with that will be housekeeping.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I'm not talking about people who are able to superannuate when — ; I'm asking you for eligibility. And can you describe it to me? Because you have your officials with you, obviously, and I would suspect they would have the regulations with them. Can you tell me whether any change has been made in the regulations which would make it possible for someone coming into the teaching field to be able to qualify superannuation, having taught for as little as a day? Or is that not a new provision?

(1530)

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — I'm not sure what you're referring to in terms of the one day, but I can only think that it is on the department employees. And that is a policy change by the commission as opposed to changes in the regulation. There is still, I think, a criterion there that states, on that particular area, that the department employee still has to have taught for 10 years.

An Hon. Member: — I'm sorry. I missed the last . . . (inaudible) . . .

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, the department employee — you say, the one day; but they must have taught, I believe, for 10 years previous to that.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Can you tell me how the policy now is different from what it was previously, and can you tell me when the policy change came about?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — it was changed in January of this year, and that is only for participation and reciprocal agreements.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I'm not arguing with the change. I simply want to be able to get the facts about what it is, Madam Minister. Can you tell me what the change was? I asked that earlier, and you didn't get around to it.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — We don't have a copy of the specific policy here, but I would be glad to send you one.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I'm prepared to wait for it later. But I would like now for you to consult with your officials and see if they could at least advise you as to what the policy change is. That shouldn't be too difficult, I would think.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — It is simply one of . . . for anybody other than department employees, it's one year. And under the new policy change of January it was one day, for department employees.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — And what was the previous policy before the change of January 1st?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — It was also one year.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — So you've changed the requirement from one year to one day. Am I correct in that, or did I miss something?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, I think the something that you missed, I clearly told you that this was a policy change by the commission as opposed to regulation. The commission has the authority to make policy, and they did so in this case.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — You didn't answer the question, Madam Minister. The question was: — has the change now been from one year to one day? That's what my question was. I didn't ask you whether the commission makes that change. I asked you whether the change has been from one year to one day and, if so, why?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — The commission has considered that time with the department, the service with the department, to be similar to that with the division, and therefore the change.

There's been other changes over the past, okay? It's gone from 20 days to 60 days to one year. And remember that a teacher must still have taught for 10 years in Saskatchewan previous to becoming an employee for the Department of Education in order to qualify under that policy.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Can a teacher come to Saskatchewan and teach for one day and qualify for

superannuation, with the reciprocal agreements and everything? Can a teacher do that, a class-room teacher?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — No, Mr. Chairman. This applies for an employee in the department that has previously taught 10 years in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, I may want to come back to this later. I want to ask you some questions with regard to operating grants for school boards and other related items.

But before I do that, and it would certainly speed up the workings of the committee if you would provide us with a list of the operating grants that are committed to school divisions in this fiscal year, for this coming school term. I notice that in last estimate considerations in the last session there was a prolonged debate about this, and at that time you indicated in your responses that the reason you couldn't give them is that it was too early in the estimates. Well we are much later in the estimates this year than we were last year, so I assume we can get that information.

Certainly I know you would be able to provide me with information on the list of the operating grants for 1985 - 86 because that's already done. But I would like that provided, if you will, and I would hope that you and your officials would have been prepared for that question, because I'm sure you should have anticipated that that would be asked, because it's been asked every year now for the last four years.

Can you provide us, Madam Minister, with information — computer print-out sheets or whatever you use — that gives us what operating grants are being provided to school divisions in this year?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Chairman, the member's quite right when he talks about the discussion in previous years, and I want the member to know why, because he was not in this House at that particular time. Estimates for Education in the past two years have been done very early in the session. And often I went through estimates before the mill rate was set and when the very estimated figures were given to school boards.

I will supply him today with a copy of the operating grants for this year, and I also want to remind him — and he will well remember from being minister of Education — that some of these could still be subject to change over the next couple of months. But the mill rates have been set, and I'll be happy to give them to him.

An Hon. Member: — It took three years to get you to do this.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well the member says for three years I refused to do this. That's not true. I didn't have those kinds of finalized figures to give before the end of May or the first part of June.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I appreciate the information. I'm kind of glad we had an election . . . a by-election in Regina North East; it seems to have changed the co-operation that exists in the

consideration of Education estimates. But putting that aside, I'm grateful that you're able to provide them to us.

I want to remind you that I, too, used to be a minister of Education and that we always provided to the opposition — the member from Indian Head-Wolseley can testify to that — provided the opposition with information so that the members of the opposition, particularly the critic, were able to have access to it. And that's only normal and natural do, on the same understanding as you have asked of me, and that is to appreciate the fact that some of them may be estimates. I know, I fully appreciate that things change over time and there are recalculations and so on. But the mill rates have now been set throughout Saskatchewan. I might add that in some cases those mill rates are not exactly small increases in the total tax dollar that Saskatchewan property owners have to pay in order to carry out the cost of education, because your government has pulled back on its share of the funding for education purposes.

An Hon. Member: — That's not serious.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well the member for Saskatoon Sutherland says not serious. Well, we'll get into that for a little while, and then if he hangs around to listen he may learn something.

Madam Minister, can I ask you a simple question about the percentage of educational expenditure covered by school grants from your department. Can you tell me what percentage of education expenditures you will be covering by operating grants in this fiscal year?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Chairman, the provincial percentage share is running at approximately 54 per cent this year, as it was last year. The member made a comment that, you know, I think he was alluding to cut-backs in education, and that simply is not true. He knows full well that there was an increase on the operating grant this year. What he may not know, because he was not in this House last year, was some changes that we made to some factors in the operating grant, one being debt retirement, is no longer recognized in the operating grant and, in fact, is being picked up 100 per cent by the provincial government which impacts very greatly on school board budgets for those that are into capital projects.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — When you say that the provincial portion of operating grants is 54 per cent, is that — are you talking about recognized expenditures or school division expenditures? Is this 54 per cent of recognized — so-called recognized, and I'm sure you know what I'm talking about because of the way the formula works — is it recognized expenditures or actual school board expenditures?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — I am talking about actual school division expenditures.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, in 1985 what percentage of educational expenditures was covered by school grants, both the actual school board expenditures and the recognized expenditures?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Chairman, 1985 — and both these years are estimated figures — 1985 was approximately 53.9, 54 per cent; in 1986 we are looking at approximately 54.8.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I'm sorry. I guess you didn't get my full question. I said: — can you tell me what percentage you covered of school board expenditures, as a total; and recognized expenditures, those which your department recognizes, in the calculation of the formula? Those are two distinctly different expenditures.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Chairman, we don't have those calculations and have not done them. But I would suggest that it would be considerably higher if you did that on the other.

An Hon. Member: — On what other?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — On the recognized expenditures. It would be higher than the percentage on the school division expenditure.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — You're saying, Madam Minister, that grants as a percentage of school board expenditures, you don't have. Is that what you're saying? For 1985, I mean 1985 . . . (inaudible) . . .

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well I gave you that.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — No, you gave me the . . . I'm sorry. You say you don't have the recognized expenditures. Okay, give me the percentage that your department paid in the last fiscal year, in operating grants, of recognized expenditure.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, Mr. Chairman, that's what we don't calculate. I'm not sure what you misunderstood, what I said before. But we did not calculate a percentage of the recognized school expenditure.

(1545)

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well it's a strange development that I hear taking place. Madam Minister, when you calculate the operating grants, you have, in the foundation grant formula, certain recognized expenditures that you recognize for school boards. Then on the basis of those recognized expenditures, you apply your formula and you provide the operating grant. You cannot be here and not have the recognized expenditures and still have been able to calculate the amount of the operating grant.

Now I ask you, Madam Minister, what percentage . . . Sorry. I'll wait. Okay. What percentage of recognized expenditures did the provincial Department of Education pay for in operating grants in the last fiscal year? Recognized expenditures.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — We have only done our calculations on the school division expenditures. And I can only tell you that a guess would be on the recognized expenditures because they are smaller than the real — okay? — that your figure would actually . . . your percentage could be approximately 10 per cent higher.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Can you tell me, minister, why you would not have the recognized expenditures which your department had to have to calculate operating grants? Why you would not have that figure with you here today for the last fiscal year?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the recognized expenditures are simply a method of distribution, and in terms of the impact, I mean, we do those calculations based on the actual expenditures, the school board expenditures, which to us are more real than the other. And therefore we just didn't feel the need to have those, that the main issue is the provision share of the expenditures, the operating.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now there's some information that either you are not providing or you do not have, Madam Minister. Since you don't have the information, I will give it to you because I bothered to do my research and do some work on it — in fact, did talk to people who are involved with this thing.

Madam Minister, in 1981 grants as a percentage of board expenditures were 51 per cent. Grants as a percentage of recognized expenditures were 53.6 per cent. And I remind you that along with that, in 1981, there was what was called a property improvement grant which was really intended to rebate education tax dollars to property owners. Property owners paid an education property tax. The provincial government said in that day, starting in the early '70s, that that tax burden is onerous and, therefore, you will get an education property tax rebate. When you calculate the property improvement grant into the amount of the operating grant, the provincial government in 1981, and in 1982, I might add, paid for a little over 70 per cent of the cost of education. That was the last full term of the New Democratic Party government in Saskatchewan — 70 per cent.

Now let me tell you what's changed, and I'll remove the property improvement grant from my further figures because now they are in the term of your government. In 1981, not considering even the property improvement grant, the grants as a percentage of board expenditures were 51 per cent. In 1982 they were 49.9 per cent. In 1983 they were 48.9 per cent. In 1984 they had gone down again to 48.6 per cent. And in 1985 there was a modest increase because somebody suggested, I suppose, there might be an election. But maybe it wasn't; maybe you people were serious. It went to 47.3 per cent.

Now, Madam Minister, how can you say that your government has such a strong commitment to education when since 1981 there has been a consistent decrease in the percentage of education costs that the government has picked up, from 51 per cent in 1981 — and if you add the property improvement grant, actually over 70 per cent — to 47.3 per cent in 1985. And you say it's higher in 1986, and I won't argue because I don't have that information; only you have it.

How can you argue that your government has had a sincere commitment to education when you've actually reduced the percentage of funding that you provide for the total cost of education in Saskatchewan? And I have not pulled these figures out of the air, Madam Minister;

they're documented. And all you have to do is either go to your department or go to the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, and I'm sure they'd be quite willing to give them to you. And I know very well that they probably have.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well the member wants to get into a whole lot of areas, and we've got all day, so we might as well do it.

First of all, I'm not sure where he gets his figures from. Perhaps he would like to send me a copy of the figures that he has done, as I have done for him. That to me would seem fair ball in terms of access to information in this House. The member knows full well that that increase has been gradually going up, and I have only to remind him to look at what has happened with mill rates over the last three years, or if he wants we can take four years, and let's compare it to the four years previous to that. And that is a very telling sign.

Now if he has forgotten, Mr. Chairman, let's refresh his memory. Last year, overall in the province, there was a one mill decrease overall; that's average. Most of them, most school divisions held at zero. We had some that went up for various reasons. They perhaps had a declining student population, therefore lost some grant money. They might have been into a capital project and had to raise five mills for their down payment on it. This year we are looking at approximately 2 per cent, perhaps a little more per cent increase on the mill rate. That's 2 per cent, Mr. Chairman.

Now let's compare to the last budget that they did, and the taxpayers across the province saw a 16.5 per cent change — 16.5 per cent. The year before that was 13 per cent, and the year before that was a 10.9 per cent increase. And the member from Regina North East really believes that he can stand here in this House with a degree of credibility and tell us that there hasn't been a commitment to education. I invite the member to be a little bit more realistic and do his homework in a more open manner than in fact what he has done.

He asks how we could possibly say we've had a commitment to education. He brings in the property tax. I would like that good member from Regina North East, a school teacher, to stand in this House and tell me what the property tax rebate did for the class-rooms in Regina, and the children. Tell me the impact that it had on the education system, how it brought the system up to date. Did it allow computer literacy, perhaps basic library resource centres? Well I doubt that, Mr. Chairman.

The only thing that did — the only thing that did was allow that member to stand in this House as a government member away back and say to the good people of Saskatchewan, look what I'm doing for you; I'm mailing you back \$200, and then the school board is going to up your mill rate by 16 per cent to pay for it. But that's just ludicrous, and he loses sight of the argument.

Well the member from Pelly sits and thinks by the seat of his pants, and he says that they up it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . How much? Better than I, eh? Well for some good reasons, perhaps he would like to wear my

skirt for a while.

Mr. Chairman . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, yes, the member from Assiniboia is correct. I am, indeed, generous. That was a very kind remark; I could have said much worse.

The commitment to education has been strong, and it will continue. It will continue, Mr. Chairman, because society can't ignore the needs of our youth who are going to be the leaders of tomorrow. It is pure and simple. We only have to look around at some of the problems in terms of youth unemployment, the difficulties that our youth are facing in the future, and we know that that sound education system is a very key component to a healthy Saskatchewan economy and quality of life. And there's no getting around it. And, quite frankly, the property tax improvement grant has nothing to do with the quality of education for that student, and I would ask the member how he can support an argument that it does.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Madam Minister, let me tell you what your policies of education have brought about, and your kind of funding has brought about, in the city of Regina. And I could extrapolate that across the province, because it's not only here.

We have seen increased numbers of students in class-rooms so that there are much heavier class-room loads than there were. There are kindergarten classes that have handicapped students in them that number as high as 24, since your government has come into power, and with your tremendous commitment to education. There are more split class-rooms now than there were with two and even three grades in each class-room, Madam Minister, because of your commitment to education.

And none of those members opposite can deny that if they have been in touch with their constituencies at all and have bothered to visit their schools lately. They will know. They will know that in many of the schools that are in their constituencies there are class-rooms that have as many as 30 and more students in them, and one teacher; that there are class-rooms in which there are two and, in some cases, three grades.

Now it seems to me . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Chairman, do I have the floor or does the member from Meadow Lake and Sutherland have the floor as they yell from their seats?

Thank you. As long as they will allow me to proceed. It seems to me . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I take it all back. Well, the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, who has not been here for three weeks, finally arrives and saying something from her seat. Now isn't that . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order. Order, please. There is a . . . perhaps the level of noise is rising to the point where the debate cannot carry on in a proper manner. I would like to ask the members to please calm down a bit.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad that you have addressed the level of noise that is rising on the side of the government benches, because that's certainly the case.

And let me tell you, Mr. Chairman, why it is rising. The level of noise is rising because we now are on a subject that's very sensitive to these Conservative members. They know that everywhere across Saskatchewan the public and the property owners are concerned about the removal and the cancellation of the property improvement grant by this government.

Because the property improvement grant was a tax rebate on education which brought about the provincial government paying over 70 per cent of the cost of education. And what we have seen since this government took office, in spite of the fact that it's increased taxes in many areas, is a reduction of the provincial share of the costs of education.

In 1981 over 70 per cent was the provincial share. In 1986, because of the cancellation of the property improvement grant and because of the operating grants not keeping up with the growing costs of education, the provincial share of operating grants — the minister says — is 54 per cent. Strange that the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association says that, as part of board expenditures, it in 1985 was only 47.3 per cent.

(1600)

That's why, Mr. Chairman, the members opposite decide that they have to make a lot of noise, hoping that they can detract the debate and the questions in this House. But since the former chairman brought them to order, I think, if they will stay that way, we can proceed with what we have to explore here this afternoon.

Now, Madam Minister, if you have had such a great commitment to education, why has there been an increase in the number of student sin class-rooms — in some cases, very large increases? Why has there been a development of more split class-rooms in our schools? Why have there been closures of schools, not only in Regina but in other places? Why have there been cuts in learning assistance programs, and in remedial programs, and band programs, and certain course options that used to be available in some high schools? That's what's happened in the last four, now going onto five, years — because of your commitment to education.

Now I want to say to the loud member from Prince Albert-Duck Lake, who continues to talk from his seat and will not stop, that in my view — and the member from Indian Head-Wolseley will agree, as a teacher — that if there is anywhere in which it is important to spend an adequate dollar in education, it's in the field of learning assistance which is helping students who have particular problems be it with mathematics or reading skills or whatever, or remedial programs on those kinds of needs.

We have witnessed, in the last three years, cuts in those programs. That, Mr. Chairman, is not proof of a strong commitment of education.

I say one more time that the percentage of the cost of education which is borne by the provincial government has dropped from 70 per cent — and I'll use the minister's figure if she wishes. I don't believe it, but she says 54 per

cent. Well even using her figure, a drop of the provincial share of education from 70 per cent to 54 per cent is a very substantial drop. That is not, in my view, a commitment to education.

Well at the same time, what's happened? Well the taxes have gone up, and she talks about an average increase of 1 mill last year. Well how in the world can any minister stand up in the House and totally ignore the fact that property taxpayers before last year received \$230 if they owned a house, in a rebate on their property taxes, and then the government cancels that property tax rebate, and somehow that's not a tax increase. I submit to you, Mr. Chairman, that if you calculate on an average home the value of the property improvement grant, you will find that the tax increase last year was at least 9 per cent on that alone — 9 mills on that alone. I'm not sure if I'm accurate on that; it could very likely be more, but that was a tax increase.

So don't stand up in the House, Madam Minister, and try to suggest that the mill rate last year increased by 1 per cent, because if you're doing that, you're ignoring the cancellation of the property improvement grant which was the largest property tax increase in the history of this province. Even the former minister of Education has chosen to admit that.

Now the reason I say, Madam Minister, that I am sceptical about the statistics you provide is, I mean, all the evidence is there. In 1982 - 1983, and I'll go back that far, operating grants by the Department of Education, through the minister were announced . . . were actually \$900,000 short of what they were announced that they would be. And in 1984 - 85 the same kind of thing happened. As a matter of fact, I believe in 1984 - 85 there was an underexpenditure of something like a million dollars — I'm not sure whether in operating or the total department expenditures. So figures which you give us in these estimates, I think it's fair enough that we would question.

Now let me . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, now the member from Weyburn decides to chirp in his seat.

Madam Minister, let me tell you this, that if you take into account what's happened with the inflation factor and the amount of grants that you have provided, that last year in 1985 and 1986 there was a reduction — if you subtract the inflation from the amount of grant increase you provided — there was reduction of operating that you provided to school boards of something in the area of the year before of 16.8 per cent. Because you provided last year, increase in school operating grants, 5.6 per cent. And when you take into account inflation, that was not a very big increase. Because the inflation was something like about that level; as a matter of fact, consumer price index showed that it was 4.4 per cent. So you haven't even kept pace with the rate of inflation.

Madam Minister, how can you justify . . . or how can you support your claim that your commitment to education has been so great when the percentage of costs that the government has picked up has dropped from 70 per cent to something in the area of 50 per cent?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — If I did my mathematics like you did,

I'd hate to think where my cheque-book and my budget book would be. I can't believe it, Mr. Chairman, I can only hope he's not a math teacher that used to teach our students. If he is, we're in trouble, I can tell you that.

You know, he talks about the budget and the commitment. I invite the member to go back and read his STF Bulletins, and he will see headlines like: — Education spending up; STF likes budget. I mean, that's his own professional organization. And then I invite him to pick up newspapers around the province, and the trustees association and the LEADS (League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents) organization. I mean, people aren't blind, and they're not stupid, but they do have a very high degree of cynicism. And I'll tell you, it's no wonder when I see the slick politics that this member from Regina North East does with figures.

Let's go back to the provincial commitment, Mr. Chairman. I want to deal specifically with a question he raised on pupil/teacher ratio. You know, much of what the member says is true — of what he says. It's what he doesn't say that is also true that makes a broader statement than the information that he has given the public or the House.

Yes it's true, in the city of Regina, for example, perhaps the city of Saskatoon, probably Prince Albert, perhaps Swift Current, that in fact the pupil/teacher ratio has gone up. But it is not true to stand in this House and blatantly say in a very broad statement that all the classrooms' pupil/teacher ratio has gone up with 25, 30 students. That's not true.

An Hon. Member: — I didn't give you a number.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Yes, you did. Now, for the member's benefit, for 1985 the pupil/teacher ratio on the average for the province — and those are the figures that the department deals with, and the member well knows it because he was minister of Education many years ago — the pupil/teacher ratio stands at 16.9. And I ask the member, if he would pay attention, to make note of that. And why I want him to make note of it is because it's down — 1984, it was 17.1. And he says, up — a very broad statement. He doesn't even recognize some of the reasons as to why it's probably up in the city of Regina and Saskatoon.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, I think it's good news that Saskatchewan's population has reached the 1 million mark and over. I think that's very good news. I also think it's very good news that the overall labour force is up much higher. In the last year and a half, 17,000 new jobs and people into the market-place, into the work-force. Now that's over and above. Obviously some of those people are families with children in school, Mr. Chairman, but he doesn't recognize any of that. He doesn't give the whole story.

And let's look at Regina systems as a very good example of some of the pressures on the class-room and some very difficult decisions that principals, teachers, and the school board has had to make. There's been the question of special education. There's more services and there's

better diagnostic techniques for identifying students that will be having some problems. And more children are requiring those and being slotted into them.

French immersions, the demand in Regina on French immersion is creating some real difficulties in terms of how many class-rooms, where the schools are going to be, how they're going to be staffed, and what happens when you set up a French immersion school. And then you have another school somewhere else that possibly the enrolment is down, and then the board faces a very difficult decision in saying, well, are we going to close this, perhaps with 100 students, perhaps with less than 100 students. All those factors come into play.

There's also the issue of the closure of schools. How many schools have been closed, he says. Well, Mr. speaker, he knows I don't close schools. We have duly elected local government people, school trustees, that are responsible for education at the local level. And I might add, Mr. Chairman, that's a better place to keep it than to bring it into this arena with some slick politician to be in charge based on political expediency. This government does not agree with what the member is suggesting, and that's precisely what he's suggests and where he would take it.

I want to come back to the mere suggestion — and I call it mere because that's all it deserves — that in fact under the NDP, because there was property rebates, that they were paying 70 per cent of school board operating costs. Once again, Mr. Chairman, that rebate had absolutely nothing to do with the operating grant for the school board. And for him to stand there and say that it does, is not true.

The 54 per cent that I gave him earlier, that is the provincial share on the operating grant. We are dealing with the operating grant. If he wants the overall picture, that's a different story because capital grants come into that portion.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Madam Minister, don't talk about on one side costs and then talk about grants. I'm talking about costs. And surely you would not suggest that when the property owner pays education tax and then gets a rebate because of revenues that only provincial governments can collect, whether it's from resources or other sources, that somehow that rebate is not a contribution to the cost that the taxpayers had to bear for the cost of education. I mean, anyone who would suggest that that is not a contribution to the cost that the taxpayer has to bear really does not understand anything about property taxes.

The property improvement grant was a rebate on property taxes, on education property taxes, and so, therefore, it was a contribution to the cost of education. Now, when that is factored in, the province paid for 70 per cent of the cost of education. It was a good program. But the members opposite, in a desperate attempt to shift the burden of the cost of education from a bigger portion by the provincial government to the property owner, removed the property improvement grant. It removed the property improvement grant.

And every day, and I do not in any way exaggerate this,

Mr. Chairman, I have citizens who tell me and who tell people on the street, who are out there canvassing in my constituency, that they think and believe that the removal of the property improvement grant was wrong. And we say, as the New Democratic Party, that if we form the next government, at the will of the people, they will have property tax relief reinstated. The minister has made it clear to this House — and she is not alone, but other have — that it is not the policy of this government to do that.

(1615)

Now I want to just respond to one statistic which the minister gave dealing with employment, because we're talking here about education, and we're talking here, therefore, about some students who are just coming into the work-force. Well let me just give the minister and other members of the committee some information as provided by Statistics Canada. And Statistics Canada reports the following, as it applies to employment: — between the ages of 15 and 24 . . . employment for people between the ages of 15 and 24 in Saskatchewan in 1981, it was 110,000; in 1985 it was 103,000 — a decrease in employment of people between the ages of 15 and 24 of 7,000.

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. I believe that when the minister was speaking she was talking about employment as it relates to the number of students coming into the system. I don't think it was a broad statement, and therefore I will not allow a broad statement on employment while we are under this estimate.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I won't argue with Mr. Chairman. I wrote down here the minister referred to 17,000 jobs created.

Mr. Chairman: — Are you challenging my ruling?

Mr. Tchorzewski: — No, I'm not challenging your ruling.

Mr. Chairman: — All right. Get on with the estimates; get on with the estimates, and I will not accept any employment statistics.

An Hon. Member: — He was only talking about what the minister said.

Mr. Chairman: — I'm not . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member for Regina North East has the floor and if he wants to remain on the topic, that is fine.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With regard to the minister's . . . with regard — and I will not talk about anything except what the minister said — but with regard to the minister's comment about the creation of 17,000 jobs, I want to say that there are students who are coming out of our schools who are finding that those illusionary jobs are not there for them. We have graduates coming out of our high school system . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. You're still trying to get into a broader statement on employment than what is acceptable. And I demand that you get back on the estimates and get off of employment.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, I, at this point, won't argue with you, except to say that we have graduates that are coming out of our high schools this year. I have been to a graduation ceremony; I will be to others. All members opposite in their constituencies have been invited, and I hope that they attend the graduation ceremonies and activities. Those students who are coming out of those schools should not have to look around and see a decrease in the number of jobs available . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. You continue to insist on getting in the broader aspect, and if you having nothing further to add to this debate, well, then I'll go to another questioner.

Mr. Sveinson: — On a point of order. Just in defence of the member from Regina North East, I think education does involve employment as it . . .

Mr. Chairman: — A point of order in not debatable. The debate continues. What is your point of order then?

Mr. Sveinson: — In order to make a point of order, I've got to outline some background. But the member from Regina North East just pointed out that going into the work-force there are fewer jobs available . . .

Mr. Chairman: — You are debating the point of order, and I ruled the point of order is . . .

An Hon. Member: — I'm just outlining some background.

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. Order. The debate continues.

An Hon. Member: — On a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: — Have you a new point of order?

An Hon. Member: — I have the same point of order, but I have to outline a little background in order to let the Chair know exactly what the argument . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. Your light is off, your light is off. The debate continues.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, let me attempt to get the minister back to the subject here. Madam Minister, in your response you made reference to mill rates. I want to also make reference to mill rates and property tax increases. Above and beyond the \$230 that every home owner had his property tax increased last year, this year again there are property tax increases that people have had to suffer because of your underfunding, in spite of the fact that you have increased taxes on everyone in Saskatchewan, particularly ordinary people, working people, people of middle incomes.

Let's take a look at . . . "The Catholic school taxes increase by three mills," Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*. "The average ratepayer will pay an additional \$37 on an average three-bedroom bungalow." Now when you add to that a similar kind of increase of municipal taxes, that's an

increase this year alone of between 50 and \$60 on the home. That's on top of the \$230 which you increased property taxes by last year.

Let's look at another one.

1986 mill rate set. Hiking local taxes. The average home owner in Prince Albert who supports the public school system will see his property taxes increase (and listen to this) between 77 and \$84 this year (and I hope that the members from Prince Albert are listening) while separate school supporters can expect an increase of more than \$100.

That's on top of the \$230 you increased property taxes last year by removing the property improvement grant, resulting in an increase in that city on an average home of \$330 on property taxes in two years, brought about by your policies of your government.

There's another one here, "Catholic board raises tax rate. School . ." This is in Prince Albert again and it refers to this tax increase which I referred to, plus what's happening in liability insurance, which we will get into yet in these estimates, and I will want to know what kind of efforts you've made to try to assist school boards in the problems that they face, where their insurance rates have gone up from 100 per cent to 1400 per cent.

Regina's taxes to rise by 3.8 per cent. A typical bungalow with an assessed value of \$12,200, civic taxes will increase by about \$27.

And then there's education tax of similar amounts on top of that.

Now here's another one. And this is from *The Estevan Mercury*.

Rural board raises school taxes 3 mills. Rising costs, including a proposed 100 per cent increase in liability insurance premiums, have forced the Estevan rural school division board to hike its annual tax assessment rate by 3 mills.

Here's another one from the same area.

Estevan separate school supporters could face hefty tax increases this year if the board does not slash its projected \$169,113 budget deficit. The increase would bring the board's overall tax rate to 71.5 mills.

And guess what, Madam Minister, they attribute this need for a tax increase to? Not sufficient grants, operating grants, from the provincial government. That's what they attribute these tax increases to.

Now, Madam Minister, this list goes on and on, and I know that you will want to argue, oh, but that's not so bad when you consider the past history. Well I want to remind you once more that it is bad because you cannot ignore the fact that last year, besides the mill rate increases, everyone who owned a home in Saskatchewan had his property taxes increased by \$230 when you removed the

property improvement grant.

Now don't you agree, Madam Minister, that the property improvement grant removal was a tax increase on property?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Chairman, I don't at all agree that that is a tax increase on property. And I'm going to explain why, and it may very well take me the remaining 35 minutes to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, the member is absolutely right.

An Hon. Member: — It's an absolute misnomer to say it's anything but a tax.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Would the member like the floor?

Mr. Chairman, I sit here today and I listen to the member for Regina North East, as I sit when he has the floor, and I hear him talk about the property tax rebate. And I hear him use the words "property home improvement." And he says it's all going into education when it was still on.

And I remind myself of what I used to hear under the NDP government, and this was in the days when there was a municipal minister that covered both urban and rural. And that minister would be out in the countryside of Saskatchewan and in the towns and the cities, and he would be talking about how the property improvement grant was a rebate for improvements on the home. That's what he would say one day. The next day he would talk that it is to make up for municipal taxes levied by the rural municipality or the city council. At the same time the good minister of Education of the day, the member from Regina North East, was running around the province and he was saying, this is a rebate for the portion of your taxes that go to education. So there we have two ministers, both out, and both saying different things as to what it was for.

And somewhere in between all that we have the good premier of the day talking about the home improvement grant — like what was it for? It was not, Mr. Chairman, for the quality of education; it was not. And for a teacher to stand in this Assembly and say that it is, I mean, that's totally wrong. And I suggest he either get a new pair of glasses or he do a few other things to clear his vision and his understanding of what the people of this province are all about.

Mr. Chairman, when I go back to the days of the NDP and I look at the emphasis on education . . . and I'll tell you what the emphasis was. In all of Canada, Mr. Chairman, we stood number 8 — number 8 in all of Canada — on how much we spent on our children in the school system. Now I don't think, if I were a teacher, that I would be particularly proud of that fact. I don't know, as a parent, if I would be. I know when I had children in the school system I had some concerns.

Now I think the member from Regina North East is going to have to decide if he wants a commitment to education. Or what's he trying to do, buy a vote? It's not easy to take back property improvement grants or anything else, but when we did so, we said there's a reason why. And the moneys have to start going to education and health, into those areas that have been neglected and underfunded. I

mean, we have a massive system that we are going to have to look at in terms of continuing care nursing homes. Schools are no different, and the programs that have to be put in to meet them.

So he wants to talk about tax. He wants to talk about it as a tax. No, I don't agree with that statement.

He uses Saskatoon and Estevan. And let's talk about Saskatoon and Estevan. yes, he's right; they increased it 3 per cent this year. Now that's not bad — 3 per cent. He neglected to tell you there was no increase last year — none. But he didn't tell you that. The mill rate, my good friend, you did not tell this Assembly that information. I deal with Estevan. You know, he's concerned about, what was it, a 3 mill increase? Something like that. He says it's very high. He uses words like slashed, budgets being slashed.

I want to remind him, in 1975 from '76 there was a 7 mill increase in Estevan. And the following year to that there was a 9 mill increase. And if that wasn't enough, the next year after that it went up by 8 mills; and the following year, another 9. And that was all in his term of government. He also, in telling about Estevan, did not tell you, Mr. Chairman, that the mill rate last year in Estevan, on schools, went down by one — minus one.

So why doesn't the member be honest— he knows the system better than what he's letting on— and stand in this House and tell the whole story.

(1630)

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well I'm quite prepared to tell the whole story, Mr. Chairman. And here is the whole story. Last year there was a tax increase on property; there was the usual mill rate increase that school boards and municipalities were forced to apply because of insufficient provincial funding. Municipalities' grants were frozen to zero. School board operating grants increased; I grant you that. But the government at the same time removed the property improvement grant which last year, if you will think of the facts, Madam Minister, increased property taxes by \$230 per home. Now that is a tax increase.

You referred to the tax mill rate increases in 1977. Well I want you to think about this: — that in 1977 there was a property improvement grant, and there was an increase in the property improvement grant, which helped to alleviate the impact of that mill rate increase.

Property taxpayers don't have that any more because your government cancelled it. In your attempt to try to shore up your growing deficit, you cancelled the property improvement grant to try to put money into your treasury, and therefore transferred more and more of the costs of education on property owners. And you can't deny, therefore, that there has not been a tax increase when you removed the property improvement grant.

Madam Minister, let me ask you a specific question, and then I will let somebody else get in. How many school boards, Madam Minister, this year, are getting . . . I'll wait till I have your attention.

Thank you. How many school boards, Madam Minister, this year have lower grants in operating that they are expecting to get, than they received last year?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — There are approximately 20 for this budget year.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — One more, please. Can you . . . And you don't have to give it to me right now, but if your staff can put it together for me later today, before 5, or tomorrow. Can you give me a list of those school boards or school divisions which are getting a reduction in operating grant this year over last year? And I don't need it right now, but will you undertake to give it to me?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I can undertake it. But you have the 1985 list from last year, and the 1986, which I just sent across the floor. And it's all there.

If you are having some difficulty in putting those two together, I can undertake to assist you.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — This is a super-sensitive minister, Mr. Chairman. She continues to treat this committee as if it was some staff of hers, and I'm not making any implication on her staff; I don't know how she treats her staff.

I asked you a simple question, Madam Minister, and I ask for your co-operation. I don't have the grants for last year. I wasn't here. I'm asking you a straightforward question. Will you give me the list of names of the school boards or school divisions that this year will get less in operating grants than they received last year? And will you at the same time undertake, since you are going to be so co-operative, to give me the amount of the reduction in their operating grant?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we can undertake to do that. I still suggest, and it has nothing to do with sensitivity . . . You know, when you give information to the opposition, you assume that they are going to use it. And yes, after estimates are done and the staff has some time, we'll gladly put it together for you, if that's what you require.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, I don't think it's good enough for you to say that you will give it to us after the estimates are done. I don't think that's a very complicated procedure. I suspect that that information is available at hand. It would just take a few minutes to put it together. I'm not asking for you to give it to me today. But in order that we can proceed with these estimates tomorrow when we get back to them, I would like you to give me the undertaking that you can give that to me tomorrow.

You have the staff. I don't have the staff. That's why we have a committee of the legislature to consider estimates. So I don't know why we want to argue about this. I'm asking you simply the question; you've given me the undertaking; I accept it. Now can you make sure that I have it tomorrow so that we can continue with this subject?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Whatever the member wishes.

Mrs. Caswell: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My concerns today are essentially on a seemingly narrow field, the social studies curriculum for grades 7 to 9, but at the same time it deals with the broader issues that has been going on in the debate in Saskatchewan for many, many years.

People are very concerned that while we have what is called public school education, that the Department of Education, through its bureaucracy, is putting its own stamp on the students of Saskatchewan that may reflect views and values inconsistent with parents. And I think this is very indicative of the social studies curriculum. And I wish to draw attention to this curriculum because there has been many parents throughout Saskatchewan who are concerned about general trends. And I believe education exists to help parents, that parents are not the people who send their children to schools and then the school is to be the boss as to what happens in that family's life.

Also there are teachers in Mount Royal High School, a high school in my riding, who are very concerned about this particular curricula, and there is also professors at the university, particularly in the history department as well as in other fields, that are concerned about the curriculum.

The main concerns of this curriculum seem to be that it doesn't take history seriously, that the history component is reduced in our schools, and people are concerned in its place is a type of what you might call inductive education that lends itself to a propaganda possibilities in the social sciences. Also I think one reason we have to be very concerned, it's not a grade 7 to 9 curriculum, but it is really the beginning. And I'm quoting here from Saskatchewan Education Chronicle Supplement, program development branch, September 1984: —

All courses in the social studies in the 1 to 12 program will undergo change. A three-phase plan beginning in 1983 and continuing to 1990 is in place. Phases will overlap since the commencement of each phase is not dependent on the completion of the previous one.

Could you verify that the intent is to expand the social studies curriculum philosophy started in grade 7 to 9, to continue to grades 1 to 12? Is this the continued policy of the Department of Education as stated in the September 1984 program development branch memo?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Chairman, the member is quite right in terms of the debate that's been going on on, particularly social studies, over a number of years.

To take her last question first, perhaps without a lot of comments, the entire direction has not been changed in terms of the policy. However, there have been some significant changes, and when I say the entire direction, I mean that what was being done was not scrapped and something else coming into place.

We met with various teachers, including some of the people that the member has talked about, the university people in Saskatoon, and various teachers at the high school. One of the main concerns coming from the teachers in the university was the lack of recognition, as they saw it, on history content, and that was a very major concern. And I might add it was also a concern of a fair number of parents around the province.

There were other concerns to do with the curriculum when it was put out in the pilot project and came about through approximately 200 — I believe it's about 200 — pilot teachers. And the changes have been ongoing with it.

I think, you know, some of the concerns that have been raised in terms of the parent being able to direct — and perhaps the whole issue of the teaching of morals and values, or the whole issue of values clarification, fits into that category. And that is where I received many concerns from parents, and criticisms towards the pilot projects that were going on.

Yes, there have been some fairly significant changes, and they have all been based on consultation. We've been trying to work a little closer with some of the people in Saskatoon, the university people. I believe that their initial complaint was fairly legitimate in terms of they were feeling rather an isolation and a lack of consultation. So I would trust that answers the member's question.

Mrs. Caswell: — I see. I thank you for the answer. We are concerned, and I am concerned, that the entire direction has not changed, because the essential criticisms I am getting are not fine tuning. People are not saying, well instead of discussing the positive and negative aspect of Cuba, shouldn't we discuss the positive and negative aspects of Afghanistan? They're not saying that. They are saying that the general trend is what they object to.

And I think that when I . . . You rightly have analysed the issues, but I think it's getting to the point that we need to have some sense that these issues are being directed — although I'm sure I appreciate you understanding what those issues are.

Here's a *Star-Phoenix* article on January 26, 1985. The title is "Social studies proposal out in left field." We all have our biases, and I don't necessarily see the *Star-Phoenix* as exactly a right-wing paper when it says that the social studies proposal is in left field. I get kind of worried about how far left it is.

I think that those concerns that Jenny Morton addressed in her article have not been met. And just talking to professors at the university this week, they are still saying the same things and they are continuing to mount an offence against the trend.

(1645)

I hear comments such as this:

My first major criticism of the proposed curriculum is that it is essentially utilitarian and materialistic. The curriculum presents a very

materialistic, almost Marxist, view of history.

Now keep this in mind, I'm not quoting from the Caswell campaign report. This is from university professors who are not noted again as representing a large right-wing fanatic segment in our population, although I don't want to stereotype any of them. But I think when an academic says, "almost Marxist view of history," I can understand why parents are upset about what they see as a socialist propaganda in these classes. And I want to know why you think the entire direction, or why you support the direction of this curriculum, and why you think it's worth preserving and just fine tuning.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well first of all, Mr. Chairman, I support a revision — and let's make that clear — a revision to some of the past social studies materials. I believe some of it is very good, and that must be retained. But there was also some that needed reviewing and revising in order to bring some things up to date.

Many changes have been made, and I'm not sure which professor the member from Westmount is referring to when she talks about the University of Saskatchewan, but one of the most vocal critics was a professor by the name of Professor Hayden, who is now working with the department, and has been for several weeks in terms of getting some of his viewpoints and concerns addressed. It's been a very open consultation process. And that will continue.

In terms of the article in the *Star-Phoenix*, I'm well aware of it. And I would suggest, since that time, there were some specific changes made in some areas. I'm not going to pretend that it's easy to catch every sentence, every word, every . . . What do they call it? . . . lesson in going through the curriculum.

I do, however, believe that the mechanism that is put into place, with the number of teachers and others that are having some input into this curriculum, is a very good process and should remain in place.

Mrs. Caswell: — I asked, the other day, a professor . . . And incidentally, I've very pleased that you are talking with Professor Hayden. I encourage you to continue that process. I'll just stop while the member from Regina Centre talks about the weather.

Okay. When I hear an aim such as the major aims of the proposed social studies, social science program, are to inform students about their own society and its relationship to other societies, and to enhance personal understanding and self-esteem, and when I consistently in the end, reading here in *The Individual in society*, grade 8 curricula, recognize and understand conflicts of communication problems, complicating choices, decisions, or relationships, I appreciate . . . And it goes on and on. The emphasis on self. The emphasis on analysing and exposing yourself to peer pressure, to discussion, I think many people would see as an invasion of privacy. And it is a type of education that people want to get away from because they want, instead, the students to have facts and to have a sequential . . . a sequence of western civilization, not sitting around discussing: — what are my values, what are the values of the other people in the

class?

And they tend to think this major thrust for such concepts as self-esteem, self-identify — the emphasis on self, especially in grade 8 — would be considered by some as needlessly narcissistic, an invasion of privacy in many respects, and turns the class-room into a clinician rather than a place where we acquire knowledge.

What are the kinds of changes that you have made so far, that you are continuing with, that you think it justifies this thrust?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I would be glad to send some material to the member that outlines some of the specific changes. You know the greatest criticism, in terms of where the emphasis is on, had to do with the lack of historical content. I don't have any difficulty with the idea of students in grade 8 needing to be able to talk about the students and their society. And I think there's a lot of history that you bring into that when you are talking about the society that you are living in today.

I think one of the major factors on this particular curriculum is the fact that we have moved into what is classified as the "information age." And students have to begin to be able to take more information and, in a very critical way, analyse it and put it through faster than what you and I ever did when we were younger than what we are today.

I think, you know, the concern is valid in terms of how much time is spent and how deep ones goes with a student in talking about their values and the self-esteem and that type of thing.

But I think regardless of what course you had — and I would only point out that the Keegstra affair in Alberta would back me on that, and what happened in that. No matter what course you have, there is a teacher in the class-room, and most teachers take the material with a great deal of respect for the values that are outside of that, in the home, the community or wherever they may be, and to apply the curriculum accordingly.

I guess, you know, you are always going to have a degree of movement that a teacher can go in terms of interpretation of curriculum, and this is perhaps the area that lends itself to a broader interpretation than what some parents would like.

Mrs. Caswell: — I think that when we talk about a need for history and the education explosion, I think that, first of all, history has not changed. We might have a few more chapters as we go along. And so, you know, I get very sceptical about revising history. I can understand it in the science book, but I'm very sceptical about revised history. That's what they do in Russia when it doesn't fit their political needs.

When I see here psychological needs, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: — "discuss what Maslow's hierarchy is; how it relates to self-concept." This psychological needs . . .

Determine how the family and others help to meet

psychological needs. Describe important events which have occurred during his or her lifetime which have related to his or her development.

That at best could be a waste of time. And I tend to think that this kind of debate or discussion in school is loaded with ideological presuppositions. I have . . . And I'm sure many teachers would have a great difficulty teaching this curriculum if they had a small "c" conservative philosophy in life.

For example, the value of interdependence and one world government is replete through this course. It is assumed that that's the direction where people are going. It is assumed that is a good and a positive. Now some people may accept that, and it is one of many political views in society. It is certainly not one that all teachers and parents hold and want to transmit to their students at the expense of knowing who Radisson and Croseilliers was, and John Cabot.

Have you considered the implications of turning history into a psychological course, and one which . . . almost to the point of the students aren't even learning psychology? But in fact they're expected to expose themselves and their private lives in a very debatable Maslow theory.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Chairman, first of all I want to say you do not revise history. You revise materials and curricula, but you do not revise history. One . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order. Order, please.

An Hon. Member: — What's your trouble?

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order.

An Hon. Member: — . . . (inaudible) . . . a snit all of a sudden.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Yes, you're quite right, the member from Regina Centre — now she's in a snit, he says. I am quite tired . . . Let me have the floor; I'm on my feet. One week you mimic chickens; the next week you mimic women. The member . . . I would hope that is not an indication . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. yes, and would the hon. members please allow the minister to speak? She's being interrupted constantly.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — I would hope that's not an indication of where the member from Quill Lakes puts the esteem of women. However, given the number of women in the opposition, I would say that is exactly where he has it — exactly.

One of the things that came up in the review, from parents, was that they wanted more Canadian content and Saskatchewan material; they wanted students to learn more about Saskatchewan. And that was overwhelmingly the majority in terms of the revision of materials for the grade 7 to 9 social studies.

Now obviously one of the difficulties in revising of

material has been to keep all the history in that was in the previous. And the other thing that came through the review, Mr. Chairman, was that it was the concepts, as we move on in time, that one has to start dealing with in terms of history, besides some facts and figures. I mean, you obviously need a focal point and you need a base to take your education and knowledge from and begin to move from that point, and that's what history is. Now there's a pretty good saying around that you don't know where you're going to if you don't know where you came from. And that's the historical factor with it.

I do not believe that the entire course is what the member seems to have the perception of. However, that does not say that I am not without concern with it. And that's why the constant review. The professor from the University of Saskatchewan, and others, are involved. And I would like to say to the member: — it is more than simply talking; they have been involved, including running a pilot project with the Saskatoon Catholic School Board.

So it is simply not a matter of talking. And some of those concerns are being addressed, and we'll continue to do so as we move along with it.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:59 p.m.