

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you, and to the Legislative Assembly here this afternoon, some students from the Morse Elementary School, and they're seated in your gallery up on the right hand side here. And they are accompanied by their teacher, Richard Postnikoff, and chaperons, Shelley Gerbrandt, Maureen Roberts, and Sheila Glydon, and Earl Conn is the bus driver.

I'd like you to join with me in welcoming them here. But before you do that, I just want to indicate that Morse gained some recognition in a very positive note last winter, and they had the mixed curling, provincial curling champions from Morse, in the Lee Weppler rink, and Mr. and Mrs. Weppler, and Mr. and Mrs. Merv Toews. I haven't had the opportunity to mention that here, and I thought I'd like to do that in conjunction with the school being here. And so I'd like the Assembly to join with me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Currie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure at this time to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this Assembly, a group of 27 grade 8 students from St. Dominic Savio Elementary School. They're presently seated in the Speaker's gallery, and they are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. James Hubenig.

I'm sure that you will enjoy your visit to the Legislative Building and, as well, I'm sure you will enjoy question period. I'll be meeting with you for pictures and drinks immediately after question period, and I would ask all the members to join with me in extending a warm welcome to these people.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLaren: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure for me to introduce to you, and through you to all members of the Assembly, 30 grade 7, 8, and 9 students from the Yorkdale Junior High School in Yorkton. And not only are we welcoming them here to Regina today, but they have just arrived from four or five days visiting Expo in Vancouver, and I wasn't sure if you had made it in time or not.

But I want to say that Alice Shuster, and Mrs. Patsy Schell, and Mrs. Polegi, the chaperons, are with their students today. We hope you had an excellent visit in Expo, and we hope you enjoy the city, or the things that go on in our legislature here this afternoon. And welcome to the legislature. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Management Tactics in Gainers Dispute

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier in the absence of the Minister of Economic Development, and it concerns the decision by the government to provide Alberta millionaire Peter Pocklington with more than \$20 million in Saskatchewan taxpayers' money — 10 million of which will never be paid back.

Has your government, Mr. Premier, been following the events at the Gainers plant at Edmonton in recent days, where hundreds of people have been arrested and where there've been a number of violent confrontations as a result of Mr. Pocklington's decision to try to drive down the wages of his employees?

And my second question is . . . First, have you been noting those facts? And secondly, do you support the kind of aggressive, anti-worker tactics used by Mr. Pocklington in this dispute; and if not, have you advised him that these tactics will not be tolerated if he expands his operations into Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I watched with the hon. member, I'm sure, the events on television, and listened on radio, and read the newspapers with respect to the activities that are going on there. I believe he said something about the Government of Saskatchewan handing \$20 million to Gainers and they would keep 10. Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to point out that when people come into the province, we do provide them the industrial incentive grant to create jobs. If we had an automobile manufacturer coming in here, say we competed for an automobile or truck manufacturer say for western Canada from Japan, we'd provide him with incentives to set up those jobs here.

We do the same for anybody that wants to develop new jobs. If they create new jobs in Saskatchewan, we'll give them the industrial incentive package and a Sedco package. I know that it's maybe more fashionable now to raise it now because there's a strike. I could point out a couple of things with respect to the labour dispute. One is that the hon. member, I think, to be fair could point out as well that the farmers' packing plant in Alberta — I believe it's Fletcher's — the farmer-owned marketing board packing plant is going through the same thing. I mean, he could raise that as well, to be fair, that it's across the board that there are some negotiations that are going on between the farmers and their packing plant and the union on one side, as there are with Gainers and the union on the other. So with respect to the negotiations, it kind of cuts across the board. It's not just Gainers; it's obviously another packing plant.

With respect to them coming to work in Saskatchewan, anybody that comes in here lives by the same labour laws that everybody else does. And if the majority of the workers want to have a unionized shop, they will, and that's the way it is, and everybody will live by those rules.

So with respect to the brand-new bacon plant that's going up in North Battleford that I know the hon. member has trouble supporting, that new plant . . . and if the members there that want to go and have a unionized shop, and if

the majority of them do, then we live by the same labour laws here, whether it's in North Battleford, Regina, or any place else.

So with respect to the facts, I'm aware of them. I note that they're going back to the negotiating table. With respect to whether it's anti-worker or not, I think it's fair that you'd have to look at the farmers' marketing board and others. And I would say that we enjoy both union and non-union types of contracts here in Saskatchewan.

There are some differences with respect to bargaining, I know. I know members opposite have said labour unions should become more militant. I don't particularly agree with that. The Leader of the Opposition, the NDP have said, militant labour is the thing to be, that labour should be much more militant. I'm not so sure that people want to see militancy on either side. So I wouldn't agree with militancy. I would say, back to the table, negotiate it, and fix it.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. You speak of Saskatchewan labour laws applying. Are you aware of Mr. Pocklington's comment reported in the press on June 5th:

I am not going to have another collective agreement with anyone. I will deal with the employees on an individual basis.

Mr. Premier, if Mr. Pocklington seeks to follow such a course of action in Saskatchewan, will you stand up and say, this is not in accordance with Saskatchewan law?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, that's precisely what I said, that anybody that operates in Saskatchewan will live under the rules that we have here, and if the majority of people working for a particular firm want to have a unionized shop and it's accepted in a democratic fashion, then that's the way it is. They're back to the negotiating table now, as I understand it, in Alberta. So they've taken shots at each other, or fired across each other's bow in carving out their position. but we will all hope that there's less militancy on both sides so that they can get back to work and have full employment in the jobs that they were doing, as well as have reasonable and fair settlements on both sides.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Final, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has mentioned the Alberta pork marketing board: is the Premier satisfied with Mr. Pocklington's dealings with the Alberta pork marketing board, and would he commend Mr. Pocklington for dealing with the Saskatchewan pork marketing board on the same basis?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, we have a very good relationship with respect to the Saskatchewan pork marketing board and the marketing arrangements, the discussions that go on between Intercontinental Packers, and the discussions that go on between the board and Gainers and others, and with respect to the new bacon plant and so forth. So I don't think it's a really good idea to be frightening people because of some labour negotiations that are going on in Alberta.

I fully expect that we will have a good bacon plant

in North Battleford, that it will be constructed in a very positive fashion, employ an awful lot of people. I understand that there's hundreds of jobs there, and there's indeed hundreds and hundreds of applicants for those new positions, and I suspect it's something that the community of North Battleford is looking for. I know that the hon. member is not in favour of the new bacon plant, but that's his choice. We are. We will be creating these. We like the paper plant, the bacon plant, the fertilizer plants, and so forth. Those things were not here when we took over, but they will be here and continue to be here as the result of what we've been doing.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Does the Premier have any objection to filing in the legislature copies of all agreement signed between his government and Mr. Pocklington so that all may know what the deal is made between your government and Mr. Pocklington?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well obviously, Mr. speaker, in due course — all those documents are public. I just remind the hon. member he was not elected to nationalize the potash industry, and he went all about it without tabling anything. And he took \$650 million of people's — spent — and we're still paying for it, and he never put a single solitary thread of evidence before the people. He just went and did it.

When he's talking about \$10 million in a bacon plant, it doesn't even mean that much with respect to the potash mines where we're still paying fortunes for; didn't create one new job — \$650 million on a political whim and he never did ask the people.

Mr. Shillington: — New question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, let me remind you that yours is more than a casual relationship with Peter Pocklington. He's a candidate for the leadership of the Conservative Party and he's . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. The member is making statements rather than asking questions. If you have a question, get to it.

Mr. Shillington: — I made a serious mistake in thinking the same rules apply to both sides of the House. The Premier . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order! If the member has a question, I'll take the question. If he doesn't, we'll move to the next one.

Mr. Shillington: — Does the Premier agree with the president of Intercontinental Packers, Mr. Fred Mitchell, that Peter Pocklington is trying to pull a big scam with this violent strike? Mr. Mitchell noted that three of the four meat packers in western Canada, including Intercon in Saskatoon, have already signed collective agreements providing their employees with the same wages which the Gainer workers are attempting to bargain. And he asked: if these companies can afford to pay these rates, why can't Peter Pocklington?

Do you agree with Mr. Mitchell that Peter Pocklington's claim that his company will go under if he has to pay fair

wage rates is little more than a big scam?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I do remind my colleague here across the way, the hon. member, that from time to time I certainly do agree with Mr. Mitchell on his observations about the meat industry, and I believe he's an astute business man. I will also remind the member, as I remind his colleague, that the Pork Producers Marketing Board in Alberta is going through the same thing, right? And I think it's only fair that you should be talking about their negotiations. These are farmers . . .

An Hon. Member: — They have not been on national television trying to aggravate the crisis.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well he says they haven't been on national television. It's a little more fashionable to be talking about Peter Pocklington on television than it is with the farm product marketing board in Alberta having the same negotiations. I just raise it because they're both going through the same thing. All right?

So I hope that both settle. I hope the marketing board that runs Fletchers settles with their union, and I hope the union that's out negotiating with Gainers have good settlements, that they get back to the table and they negotiate and they all have a fair and reasonable settlement. I mean, obviously, everybody does. So if the hon. member wants to imply anything else, well, I mean, it's . . .

Mr. Shillington: — New question. Mr. Premier, you refer to Fletchers. It's not as clear that Fletchers relish the kind of confrontation that Peter Pocklington does, because Peter Pocklington has been on radio and television with statements which can be designed for nothing other than to aggravate the situation rather than settle it.

Is this what your government is planning to import, this kind of confrontational management style, and shelling out millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to accomplish this violence in Saskatchewan's labour scene?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that that is not the case. And we have had very good management and union negotiations and settlements in Saskatchewan right across the board, Mr. Speaker. We have strong support for the new companies that are coming in. For example, the Weyerhaeuser Company is very much supported by people that I talked to in Prince Albert, whether they work inside the pulp-mill or outside, or unionized or not. The same applies to people who are looking for jobs in the meat-packing business. They like to see the new companies come in. So I look forward to good labour negotiations.

You and I both know that they may, as I said, take shots across each other's bow when it comes to negotiations. And it's a little bit more fashionable, more fun, to be talking about Peter Pocklington in the media, than it is the farm products marketing board, the pork council, that has the same negotiations going on.

So I mean, I'm sure he understands a little bit of that. He's

been in politics a while and in the media from time to time. It's much easier to talk about one than it is the other. There will be fair settlements in Saskatchewan. We'll all live under the same rules.

Dispute with Saskatchewan Doctors

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Question to the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, can you report to the Assembly on what medical services have been withdrawn today as a result of your inability to reach a settlement with the Saskatchewan doctors? And can you tell us what specific steps you have taken to protect the health and safety of the general public in Saskatchewan where medical services are withdrawn?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well certainly, Mr. Chairman, I think it's not fair for the member opposite to accuse me of my inability. There's negotiations that have been taking place — were taking place. I've invited the doctors back to the negotiating table at any time; that offer stands.

The question that the member asked is, what type of procedures are in place to ensure that no one is having undue suffering or danger? I have a system set up of monitoring with hospital administrators to see that things are taking place. And it's only more of an inconvenience than a danger to anyone's medical health, as I understand. We monitored this in Prince Albert a month ago when it happened there. We did the same in Swift Current the other day, and the same is going on at Humboldt today.

So whatever further withdrawals of service the doctors feel are necessary, you can rest assured, Mr. Speaker, that we will be monitoring the situation as closely as we possibly can.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, I don't think that the Saskatchewan public will be very comforted by what you have got to say on the issue. It's becoming clear to the general public that you don't want a settlement. You want a confrontation with the doctors. You people are so desperate to get an election issue going that you're prepared to jeopardize the safety of the Saskatchewan public to . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order. The member is making statements rather than asking questions. I would ask you to get directly to your question.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I will get directly to my question. In light of the fact, Mr. Minister, that you have created this unnecessary confrontation with Saskatchewan doctors, isn't it your hidden agenda to create a fight rather than to have a settlement brought about?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know how the member opposite can accuse me of wanting to have a confrontation when I've called daily for the doctors to come to the negotiating table.

He talks about a hidden agenda, Mr. Speaker. It might be interesting for you to know, and the people of Saskatchewan, that the legal counsel for the doctors of

Saskatchewan is one Mr. Ching, ex-deputy minister of Labour under the Blakeney government, and law partner of candidate Roy Romanow and ex-candidate Taylor. So I think if there's a hidden agenda that it may well look on that side of the House to see the advice that's given to the Saskatchewan doctors by Roy Romanow's law partner.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, the minister seems unseemly strained in answering to this question, and he didn't answer the question. Mr. Minister, if the protection of the public health and safety is uppermost on your agenda, then why have you allowed this dispute to get to this point? It's been dragging on for nearly a year and you have failed to deal with this in a very serious and an urgent way. If the truth be known, Mr. Minister, you've been dragging your feet in order to start this confrontation which you are now continuing to try to elevate to higher levels. Isn't that what

...

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order, please. If the member would refer to *Beauchesne's*, you'll find that you're not allowed to impute motives in question period, and that's what the member is doing. If you have a question that's a legitimate question, I would ask you to proceed with that question.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, I will proceed with my question. Mr. Minister, isn't the fact that there have been months of confusion, indecision and backtracking on your part, as a result of your desire to have this confrontation rather than to reach a settlement?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, that's absolutely false. Saskatoon Agreement II was worked out with mutual discussions with the doctors of Saskatchewan and the Government of Saskatchewan — the only such type of agreement in Canada — ending extra-billing in a peaceable way. This is the first set of negotiations flowing from Saskatoon Agreement II. Those negotiations have bogged down. However I can say most sincerely, from our side of the table, we are most interested in resuming those type of negotiations.

And I say further, if the member opposite, with his connections to Mr. Ching and Mr. Romanow, if he's very interested in getting negotiations going, he should tell his political cronies to advise the doctors likewise.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — New question, Mr. Speaker, and I have a question to the Premier in that the Minister of Health refuses to address the issue, even in this House, in a serious way.

Mr. Premier, since your Minister of Health appears incapable of reaching a settlement with Saskatchewan doctors, will you now make a commitment to the people of Saskatchewan to get personally involved in this dispute? And will you sue the powers of your office to bring the two sides together and urge them to reach a settlement as quickly as possible for the good of all Saskatchewan residents?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said this morning on television, I am very confident that we're close to a settlement. The discussions that I witnessed showed that both sides were very close. I have every confidence in my cabinet ministers and in the Minister of Health, in terms of his ability to describe what is in Saskatoon Agreement II, and all the financial implications that we have looked at. I have been briefed by the minister; I have sat and certainly discussed it with the medical profession. And as I said, we're very, very close.

There may be, as I said on television this morning, some sympathy for the doctors in Ontario with the medical profession here, because they know what they're going through. And that's the end of extra-billing in Ontario and it's the end of extra-billing here. And I believe there's maybe a little sympathy or empathy, if you will, but we're very close. And as I understand the negotiations, and I understand the rapport between it, I believe that when we get back to the table, Mr. Speaker, we can settle it very, very quickly.

Funding for Saskatchewan Hospitals

Mr. Koskie: — I want to direct a question to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, are you aware that a separate protest is under way today at St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon, where seven specialists, the seven anaesthetists, have withdrawn all but emergency services to protest your government's inadequate funding for hospitals around the province?

I ask you, Mr. Minister, can you explain to the Saskatchewan taxpayers why you were afraid to tour the hospital, as arranged, and to listen to the concerns of the doctors and others at St. Paul's about your government's funding priorities? Why did you back out?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Chairman, there was no . . . Mr. Speaker, there was no back out whatsoever. The St. Paul's Hospital, the chairman advised me on Friday that they were cancelling the procedure, the cement pour that was supposed to take place today. I indicated to Mr. Fleck that I would be willing to attend there, but the hospital board decided to postpone it for a while.

I just want to clarify a few of the allegations the member opposite has made about the funding to St. Paul's Hospital. Let me indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that St. Paul's be funded at a higher level this year than it was last year. And it would be interesting to know that the increase in funding to St. Paul's Hospital since we took office, over the last four years, has increased some 53 per cent in their funding — 53 per cent over four years. And I would point out that's higher than any other hospital of its class in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — New question to the minister. Mr. Minister, due to the inadequate funding from your government, all but emergency service was cancelled at St. Paul's Hospital for a two-week period, both last Christmas and last Easter. A month-long shut-down is expected over the summer months, and a further shut-down is planned for next Christmas.

All are required because of the hospital's budget deficit, and the deficit is a direct result of your government's failure to adequately support existing hospitals.

I ask you: is the minister aware that over the past four years the waiting list for surgery for St. Paul's Hospital has nearly doubled from 1,200 names to about 2,000; and are you aware that the waiting period for surgery over the past four years has gone from five or six months to a total of 14 months? I ask you: what action are you prepared to take to rectify this here condition in the health care for Saskatchewan people?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, it seems strange that he thinks that 53 per cent increase over four years is not adequate funding. Let me indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, and to this Assembly, the difference in funding over the last five years.

In 1981 - 82, the gross operating expenditures approved for St. Paul's Hospital was \$21.1 million, and the approved ADC (approved daily census) was 285. It goes up year by year, Mr. Speaker, and I won't take the time in the House to read all of the years, but we'll look at 1985-86 where the approved operating budget is \$32.3 million, with an approved daily census of 298.

So a continual increase, year after year, and my officials have been assured that the in-patient summer activity this year will be the same as last year, and that the number of cases daily admitted will be higher than it was last year.

So to make these types of allegations, that the funding to St. Paul's Hospital has not kept pace, is completely wrong — completely wrong, Mr. Speaker — because the very fact that it's increased 53 per cent over that period of time — I say again, the highest of any hospital of its type in this province.

And I'd like to remind you . . . And it's ironical when I see the member from Quill Lakes stand in this House and start complaining about waiting lists, because I can remember the days when I was in opposition and one Mr. Rolfes was his health minister. He stood in this very House, back in that seat there, and said the sign of an efficient hospital was a waiting list.

Mr. Koskie: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister how you can shell out a quarter of a million dollars in taxpayers' moneys to a PR firm to organize meetings and write speeches for you, and at the same time deny hospitals adequate funding? And how can you support a government that has spent over \$20 million in advertising this year on self-serving government advertising and then tell the hospitals that you have no money? How do you justify it? What are your priorities? Is it health care or the survival of the Tory party?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Chairman, I don't think anywhere in Canada, other than this province, do the people understand that the priorities of their government is health care. The government of Grant Devine has done more in health care for the province of Saskatchewan

since being elected than any other government in the Dominion of Canada. When you see 11.6 per cent of the budget this year put towards health care, I think no one can question that that is a considerable thrust in health care. When you see 1,600 nursing beds being built in this province in reaction to a moratorium . . .

We talked earlier about potash . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 53 — An Act to amend The Forest Act

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the minister of forestry I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Forest Act.

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

Bill No. 54 — An Act to amend The Horse Racing Regulation Act

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Horse Racing Regulation Act.

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

Bill No. 55 — An Act to amend The Meewasin Valley Authority Act

Hon. Mr. Folk: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Meewasin Valley Authority Act.

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

MOTIONS

Substitution of Members in Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, just prior to orders of the day, and by leave of the Assembly, I would move:

That the name of Mr. Tchorzewski be substituted for that of Mr. Engel on the list of members comprising the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

I so move, seconded by the member from Quill Lakes.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 51 — An Act to amend The Legal Profession Act

Hon. Mr. Dutchak: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise

today and move second reading of The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 1986. The amendments being proposed in this legislature have been recommended to me by the benchers of The Law Society of Saskatchewan.

Most of the changes are intended to facilitate and simplify the procedures followed by the discipline committee of The Law Society. For instance, to avoid appointment of several vice-chairmen of the discipline committee who act when the chairman is absent or has a conflict of interest, it is proposed that if the chairman is unable to act he shall designate another member to act in his stead.

The hearing committee will now be able to amend a formal complaint during the course of a hearing. But if such an amendment has the effect of changing the charge against the member, or adding a new charge, the hearing must be adjourned to give the member an opportunity to prepare a defence to the new charge.

This Bill also repeals a section which provides that The Law Society shall report to the Minister of Justice, who may then intervene in the process when a member is suspended or is struck from the roll. An adequate appeal process makes such a provision unnecessary. And the Special committee on Regulations, in its review of the proposed new Chartered Accountants Act, recommended deletion of this power in all professional association statutes.

The Law Society, in addition to the annual audits of lawyers' accounts, is now doing random spot audits. A new provision allows members to be charged for the expenses of these audits in situations where the audit reveals evidence of a contravention of a rule or by-law of the society.

Finally, pursuant to a recommendation by the national law society's body, it will be necessary for persons who wish to be admitted to practise law in this province to be Canadian citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend the Legal Profession Act.

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want an opportunity to take a look at the comments made by the minister in introducing the second reading, and also to pursue the amendments with some discussion with the Saskatchewan bar. And I therefore beg leave to adjourn debate at this time.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mrs. Duncan that Bill No. 47 — **An Act to amend The Direct Sellers Act** be now read a second time.

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

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Dirks that Bill No. 45 — **An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984** be now read a second time.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Social Services

Ordinary Expenditure - Vote 36

Mr. Chairman: — Would the minister like to introduce his officials?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Yes, beside me, deputy minister Mr. Hnatiuk; directly behind me, associate deputy, Raynell Andreychuk; to her right, Dan Cunningham; and to the right of my deputy minister here, Mr. Uhren. And as well to assist us here today is Mr. Ian Wilson from the Legal Aid Commission.

Item 1

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I would like to begin by asking some questions on the item listed as subvote 1, administration, and then I will want to ask some questions about salary-related items and trips and so on.

I note that, in the estimates over the years, since 1982 - 83 there's been a very substantial increase in the budget for administration. In 1985-86, which is the last fiscal year, I believe you budgeted \$8.5 million for administration. There was, through the year, a supplementary amount of 2.2 million that was added to that, for a budget of 9.8 million. Back in 1982 - 83 the budget for administration was only 4.4 million. We see overall, over that period of time, an increase of 122 per cent.

That seemed like a very high increase in administration when you have, your government has, been cutting back or freezing funding for non-government organizations and other such organizations. There may be a justifiable explanation, but I would certainly like to hear it. Can you explain this dramatic increase in the cost of administration of the Department of Social Services?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Would the member clarify the percentage figure that he used? You said something — 120 per cent increase. What exactly were you referring to?

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I am referring, Mr. Minister, to the administration budget, subvote 1. Since 1982 - 83 there has been an increase of well over 100 per cent in your budget for administration of your department. It's got nothing to do with the programs of your department as such, but the administration alone has increased by well over 100 per cent, I think in the area of 122 per cent since the budget of 1982 - 83.

And just maybe it'll help; I'll repeat it again. In 1982 - 1983

the cost of administration in your department, subvote 1, was \$4.4 million. Your budget for this year — I just misplaced it for a minute — is well in excess of that. Can you explain the increase in your administration budget over that period of time?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well you're going to have to be more specific when you said you misplaced it, because it's important that we do not mislead the public. I want to know exactly what figures you're referring to, and then we'll be able to respond to them very specifically.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Very simple, Mr. Minister. I'm referring to subvote 1, the subvote dealing with administration. It's in your Estimates book. I have it here: first item of the Department of Social Services, administration, budget \$9.8 million. In 1982 - 83, that same subvote, administration, \$4.4 million — an increase of somewhere in excess of 100 per cent, close to 122 per cent.

I'm asking you, Mr. Minister, a question that should be very clear to understand: what is the nature of such a dramatic increase in the cost of administration in subvote 1?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well, Mr. Chairman, naturally over a four-year period of time we are going to experience salary increases, and over four years those are going to be significant in terms of the implication that they would have. So part of the increase is explained through normal salary increases over a four-year period of time.

The second explanation for the increase has to do with the implications of the young offenders programming as it relates to the province of Saskatchewan. As you are aware there was a Young Offenders Act passed by the federal parliament; that Act has substantial implications for all the provinces. Here in Saskatchewan we have had to provide additional programs and services as a consequence of that Act; therefore, we have had to significantly increase personnel which, of course, means that there are financial implications.

The third rationale for the increase in administration has to do with our SAP automation project. As you know there was a recommendation some years back that the SAP system, the Saskatchewan assistance plan system should have been automated, should have been computerized; that was never done years ago. We believe that is a very important element of rationalizing and providing a more efficient SAP system in the province. That has had significant fiscal implications for the Department of Social Services' budget. So when you add up the SAP automation, the young offenders' implications, and the salary increases over four years, you have the rationale for the increase in administrative costs.

(1445)

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I am sure, Mr. Minister, that the salary increases over that period of time, with the attitude of your government, have not been 122 per cent, even though you tend to reward your personal staff and others differently than you reward the general public service. Can I ask you, Mr. Minister, how much of this budget in

administration is for the purposes of the word you say is being done under the Young Offenders Act?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — The total young offenders implication is \$760,000.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, all that expenditure is being made under the administration budget that is included in subvote 1?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — There are additional costs not included under this subvote, but the figure I have given you pertains to this subvote.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you. That 760,000 is a large sum, but a small sum compared to the increase of 122 per cent which we have seen over the last four years, Mr. Minister, which seems to me a very unusually high increase. Now you mentioned that you are computerizing the SAP, the Saskatchewan assistance plan program. You have been computerizing that now for the last two years. Are you telling the committee that you're still in the process of implementing that now in the third year, or is that process now complete? Because if it is complete, Mr. Minister, then I would question the efficiency of putting in your computer system, because obviously it has not saved you any money; it has not saved the taxpayers any money. It appears it is costing them a considerable amount of money more. Is that implementation of the computerization of SAP completed?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — For the member's information, this SAP computerization project is one of the largest computerization projects ever undertaken by any particular department. So we're not talking about something which is going to go from conceptual stage to implementation stage in a very short period of time. We have had to deal with the conceptual stage; then, of course, we had feasibility; then there was design; then there was the implementation of pilot projects. Those pilot projects are finished; we're now evaluating the pilot projects.

We will then be moving to the implementation phase, and the entire implementation phase we expect to be concluded with the project entirely running as projected by sometime in July, August, '87 - 88 which is exactly within a few months where the project was anticipated to be when it was first begun in terms of its conceptualization and feasibility.

It's not the kind of thing that one implements in a short period of time. It does have to be done intelligently, and that takes a fair amount of time. And as I indicated, we have had two pilot projects; those are presently being evaluated and then we will be moving into the full implementation phase.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I would never pretend to be an expert on computerization or computers and I'm sure the minister wouldn't either, but it seems to me to be an unusually long period of time to be implementing this program which has been praised by some members of the government as creating much more efficiency when it's implemented and so on.

I would be interested in knowing, and I'm sure the committee would as well: how much has the department spent until now? And will you include in that how much you're planning to spend in this fiscal year on this project? I kind of suspect it's probably a large amount of money, and I think it is useful for us to know how much was spent.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — We'll provide that to you shortly. I would simply respond to the member that I have had previous experience in the conceptualization and implementation of computer programs and systems on a much smaller scale than the one we are talking about today. But even those particular systems themselves required substantial lead time before one could even begin to implement on a pilot basis. And once that had happened, there was considerable evaluation and reform of that which had previously been thought to be appropriate that had to take place.

In the smaller projects that I was involved with we were talking about a full year before anything could even be considered complete. And the member would, I'm sure, want to know that the comparison of the projects was such that likely the one that I was involved in previously might be 10th the size of what we're talking about here. So they certainly do take a long period of time and you don't want to make mistakes. And I'll get the information on the stats for you right away.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — When you have it, send it over, and then I'll ask other questions on it when I get it. And we'll go on to another aspect of this subvote. Mr. Minister, if your staff will work on that it will be okay.

Mr. Minister, I'm now dealing with specifically the other expenses portion of this subvote — other expenses — you have budgeted \$5.4 million. Last year you had budgeted \$3.8 million. That, in itself — it's got nothing to do with staff salaries because that's in another portion of the subvote — that in itself is a very dramatic increase, and I think is dramatized even more when one considers that in 1982 - 83 other expenses had a budget of 1.3 million. You are now having a budget of 5.4 million, an increase of 315 per cent.

But my more specific question is: why the increase from \$3.8 million last year to \$5.4 million this year?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well there's the SAP system funding, 1.3 million this year; and the young offenders' information system, 470,000 for this particular year.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — One more question on the SAP (Saskatchewan assistance plan) system project. Is this setting up of this project or the doing of the project being done in-house by officials in your department, have you contracted that out to someone, or is the Saskatchewan Computer Utility Corporation doing it? Can you tell me how his work is being done?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — It's a partnership approach. There is a team of individuals, led by department staff working in conjunction with the contractual staff, and the arrangement is with Systemhouse.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll wait for that other information which your officials are preparing for me. Can you give me a list of names and salaries of your personal staff which will include their salaries that they are making now and what they made last year?

Mr. Minister, while the copy is being Xeroxed, can you also do the same for me for the salaries of your major officials in the department — the deputy, the associate deputy, and your executive directors?

Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have here the senior department officials. I notice there has been, since April 1, 1985, a 3 per cent increase in salary. Can you tell me whether there was any increases to any of the people here during 1985, other than this 3 per cent between April 1 of '85 and April 1, 1986?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — No.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I see the other sheets are here. Thank you. Mr. Minister, are these the staff, your personal staff, dealing with the Department of Social Services, and do you have other personal staff that have responsibilities for other departments, in that you have more than one department?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Yes, I have four ministerial responsibilities, and there are other staff. Information was sent over pertaining to Urban Affairs during Urban Affairs estimates. These individuals pertain to the Social Services' function in my office, and of course it's fair to say that from time to time people are going to be involved in other responsibilities. When you work in one office, you can't simply say that this particular individual is going to do this and nothing else. There are times when their duties are going to overlap and they're going to be asked to do something that relates to some other department.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I appreciate that, Mr. Minister, one Mr. Hild, who received a salary increase of 12 per cent last year, no longer is responsible for duties related to the Department of Social Services?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Hild is in the Department of Urban Affairs appropriation. He is not involved in terms of appropriation out of Social Services.

(1500)

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Since Mr. Hild received a 12 per cent increase in 1985, when most other people in the public service were receiving no increase at all, I'm interested in knowing: on the list of staff which you have provided me, Mr. Minister — one Lyle Krahn, William Rayner, Shelly Fuller, and Ruth Wright; and Ms. Fuller obviously has not worked all the year; it must be a new employee — can you tell me, for the three people who you have listed for me, salaries for June 1, '85, and June 1, '86, whether in 1985 prior to June 1 any of them had received an increase in salary?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — For the information of the member opposite, concerning a Mr. Krahn, he commenced employment June 6, '84 as a trainee at 20,037, and then

was promoted to a ministerial assistant 2 on June 1 of 1985, and the salary was 24, 055, and then received a normal increment in '86 to the figure that you see on the page before you.

Concerning Miss Wright, she was promoted to the senior ministerial secretary position from a ministerial assistant B position, which she commenced in 1983, July 1983. So then on May 1, 1984 she was promoted to that position as being senior ministerial secretary at 20,098 per month, and then each year thereafter on January 1 received an annual increment increase.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, in my calculations, in the year June 1 '85 to June 1 '86, your personal staff has received an increase of 4 per cent in pay, slightly marginally more than 4 per cent; your senior administrative people have received 3 per cent — and I know that those figures can't always be translated because 3 per cent of \$73,000 is considerably more than 4 per cent of some other amounts.

Can you explain how your personal staff is getting higher increases, but people in the department are getting lower increases? We have made this point in the House before, and I make the point about the negotiations that took place with various numbers of people in the public sector, including teachers who, in 1985, your government said should not get any increase in pay. Ultimately there was a lump sum, but that does not affect their salary base.

But with your personal staff, Mr. Minister, those rules don't apply. And I know you will call it promotions; you will call it reclassifications. The point is, you have found a way to increase the staff — and I don't mean to pick on one individual, but Mr. Krahn who since 1984 has had his salary increased by something in excess of \$6,000 a year, or around \$6,000 a year — I'm not sure that there are many other people in our society who have had their salaries increased by \$6,000 a year. As a matter of fact, that's two-thirds of the amount that people who are working on a minimum wage and trying to raise a family are making, that's what those people are making, the amount that your personal staff has had increased in their pay.

And I really have to question the fairness of that. We won't pursue it for long, but I think . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, we will then. If you choose to pursue it long, I will too, and we'll get into a good debate on it.

I'm just telling you, you should treat the people, the general public in Saskatchewan, in the same way as you treat — I'm not talking about only you personally; I'm talking about all of the ministers — as you treat your personal staff when it comes to remuneration.

How do you justify an increase of 4 per cent to your personal staff, but less than 4 per cent to everybody else?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Chairman, it always disturbs me when we come to this time in the estimates and we find the members opposite not wanting to tell the whole story.

The members of my staff receive increments in the same way that anybody else in the civil service receives increments. And just as anybody else in the civil service receives a salary increase if they have a promotion, staff in my office, if they assume higher responsibilities, new duties, are reclassified; are working longer hours than previously; have greater responsibility on their shoulders than previously; they also receive a promotion and a commensurate salary increase.

Now I asked the member from Regina Centre, when he was on his feet on a similar issue the other day, whether or not he would put on the record his support for the principle that civil servants, when they receive a promotion, should also receive a commensurate salary increase. Do you know what? He refused to put his support on the record for that principle.

Now I want to know whether you, also, are in objection to the principle that anybody working for the public of Saskatchewan, who receives some kind of a promotion which means increased responsibility, should not also receive a commensurate salary increase. I want to know whether or not you support that or whether or not you are in opposition to it. Because I can tell you I will go through my riding and I will let the public servants of Saskatchewan know exactly where the member from Regina North East stands if he stands in opposition to that principle.

That is a fundamental principle which I support, which members on this side of the House support, and I would have thought that the members of the NDP party would support it also.

There was a time when you were just an MLA and you were not a cabinet minister and you received a certain salary. When you were promoted to the position of cabinet minister under the former NDP government, your salary increased commensurately. You didn't say, no, I'd better not accept this salary increase even though my duties have increased. You knew full well that it was appropriate that if your duties were increased, your salary should be increased as well.

That is exactly the principle that I hold in my office, that we hold in the Department of Social Services, that I hold as the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, and that we as a Progressive Conservative government hold. People who receive promotions will receive increased salaries in the public service of Saskatchewan as long as this government is in power.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, I do not argue about people who receive promotions getting the kind of pay that their new position is scheduled to pay. That is quite reasonably and normal.

I object, and so do fellows and my colleagues in our caucus, to what you have done, and that is make a mockery of that whole principle when it applies to your political appointees, totally in contradiction to what happens when it applies to other people, whether they work for the government directly or whether they work for some agencies that are funded by the government.

In 1985, Mr. Minister, people who worked for the public in the Government of Saskatchewan received no increase in pay. Even the member from Moosomin will agree to that. But many of your political appointees received increase of 4 per cent, 8 per cent, 12 per cent, and 16 per cent — that was in 1985. That is the principle that I'm arguing against.

That seems to me utterly unfair. And it seems to the public of Saskatchewan to be utterly unfair that you apply one set of rules to your political appointments — and I don't question their capabilities; I'm sure they're quite capable people — but you apply a different set of rules to the general public service, as a government.

In your particular situation, Mr. Minister, maybe you've applied a fair set of rules, but I'm talking about the government, and that has not been the case. And that's the point that I'm making with you here today. Simply because one is a political appointment shouldn't make that person any more privileged than somebody else who works in the normal public service, whether it's at a associate deputy minister level, or whether it's at a social worker level, or whatever — although I know that the ways of determining those salaries are different in that there's a different kind of negotiations that take place.

Mr. Minister, you may want to comment on that, but I will ask my next question and then let . . . you can comment, and then you can answer my next question.

I would like to have from you — and I know you're not . . . have not been known to be as wide a traveller as some of your colleagues. But I would like to know the trips that you have taken in the last fiscal year by government executive aircraft — that's a standard question — and all of the information that goes with that: the purpose of the trips, the destination, the kind of officials that you want to provide for us, and so on. And, well, I'll stop with that one; then I'll ask you my next one.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well before I respond to that question on travel, I wasn't surprised to hear the response from the member opposite. You conveniently ignored the very important principle that I was attempting to establish and to communicate to you.

Public servants are public servants if they are paid from the public purse. And if they receive some kind of a promotion because their duties have been increased, then they should receive a commensurate salary increase — whether it is in the deputy minister's office, whether it is at the social work level, whether it is at the minister's level, whether it is in middle management, wherever it is. That is a very important principle.

Now you seem to suggest that somehow it's okay for some public servants to receive salary increases if they are promoted, but not for others. Now I as a cabinet minister, and my colleagues, we have decided on our own that we are not going to take salary increases; nor have we done so for the last two or three years — three years running now, third year in a row that we have decided not to take personal salary increases. But we have said that anybody working for the public service in Saskatchewan, if they receive a promotion, they will also

receive a salary increase.

In my own Department of Social Services, which has approximately 2,000 employees, there are many people over a four-year period of time that for one reason or another have been appointed to a higher position and have received a commensurate salary increase.

And the same thing has happened in my office. I have had staff leave; I have had staff promoted; I have more staff in my office today because of the four responsibilities that I have than I had previously. So it's understandable that the chief of staff is naturally going to receive more. That's common sense. And I would have thought that the member opposite would have been fair enough to recognize that, regardless of the political battles that they would like to fight and win.

There are some very simple principles that we would all agree with. And if I were in opposition and you were in government, I think I would be arguing for the principle that any public servant, if they have a promotion, should receive a commensurate salary increase. And that is the position that I stand by and will continue to stand by.

As it relates to travel in my capacity of Minister of Social Services, I will provide the member opposite with the same information that I provided concerning my travel in the Department of Urban Affairs, and I will send that over at the appropriate time.

(1515)

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, surely your staff must have that information now in that you must have anticipated this question. Can you have somebody photocopy that information so that I can get it? And secondly, can you also give me the trips that you have made out of province or out of the country on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan in your capacity as the Minister of Social Services, the purpose of those trips, all people who may have accompanied you, and the total cost of those trips? And I mean with that, flight, meals, accommodation, and so on — the trips out of province and the trips out of country.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Chairman, I indicated that I will provide the member with that information. The information that I have before me is the first opportunity that I have had to review this particular information in detail. I would like to review it myself, and I will give it to you later today if that's satisfactory.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Certainly if you are unprepared to give it to me now it's going to have to be satisfactory. What I don't understand, Mr. Minister, is why every time we get to ask that question, even though we've been doing the estimates of your government for several weeks now, we have minister after minister stand up and say, I don't have that information, when you very well knew it would be asked. Surely you have a briefing session with your staff in preparation for your estimates.

Can you tell me whether I will at least be able to have that information before 5 o'clock in case I want to ask . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, that's not what he said. He

said, when appropriate; probably later today. And if I can get them before 5 o'clock, in the event that I may want to ask you some questions on it, I would appreciate to have it. I don't need it right now. If you don't have it, I can't get it. But your staff will be able to get it for me by 5 o'clock, I hope.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well I indicated that I would provide it to you today. You said you don't need it right now. That was the point I was making originally. And we will pass it on to you.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Sorry, I guess I didn't make myself clear. Will you give it to me before 5?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Yes.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, I appreciate that. I now have the information on the SAP automation project costs. The figure for '86 - '87 is incorporated, and this is the total figure, I assume: \$4.1 or just about \$4.2 million is what it's costing to implement this computerized system. Am I correct that the total accumulated cost is \$4.1 million?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — To implement and operate.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Yes, that's all here. I see that — development, implementation, and operation; and the operation for '85 - '86 is \$724,630. But this is now . . . Mr. Minister, my question is . . . And maybe it's clear here. Now that I look at it a second time, I think it is. This is not the accumulated cost. This is your budget for '85 - '86, \$3.2 million; '86 - '87, \$4.1 million; that's just for this year. Am I correct in that?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — That's correct.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well my quick calculation here, and I don't have a calculator, is about \$9 million is what it's costing you to implement this automated system. That's a considerable amount of money. What kind of efficiencies do you estimate that this project, when completed, is going to bring about that will be able to justify this kind of expenditure?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — The estimated overpayment savings resulting from the SAP system in '86 - '87 is \$2.2 million. But the system will not be in full operation until late in the fiscal year, so the growth in savings for a full operating year are less than proportional. The average usage during '86 - '87, in other words, won't be complete. Some time during the year it will be around 45 or 50 per cent average usage. So the savings in a full operating year just in overpayments will be substantial.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — What does your department base that calculation on? Is it something that comes out of the air, or do you have some scientific or research data, or are you just guessing because it's good to guess?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well the feasibility studies and the pilot project testings.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, I'm interested in exploring something in the area of

prevention, and I'm only going to deal with one item on that because I think it's an item that is of some significance. Do you have in your department a program called a parent-aid program or do you fund such a program with a non-government organization, an NGO? It's a parent-aid program which provides assistance to parents who may be finding difficulties with their children and other related difficulties. Do you have such a program, and what kind of funding is in it?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Yes, we certainly do operate such a program. It's an important program in the province. The funding is split in various ways, and we'll get that information to you as soon as my officials can pull it together.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Is there a budget for about — I'm not sure — is it 500 million? Give me a rough figure; it might be satisfactory.

I can pursue another aspect to this question, Mr. Minister, I am told that there was some consideration being given to transferring this program out of the department to a non-government organization. Was that consideration made? Have you decided to do that? Or what is the status of that question?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — The parent-aid program has always been delivered by non-government organizations — Peyakowak in Regina, for example; an organization in Saskatoon that is a non-government organization that delivers the parent-aid program. So one can't talk about it being transferred from government to the NGO sector.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Maybe I have misunderstood some of the operation. Did not some aspect of this program — was not some of it delivered by the department itself?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Very early on back in 1982 when the program was first developed, it commenced in the department and then was devolved to non-government organizations — the society for the protection of children in Saskatoon. And I believe the program commenced in Saskatoon.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Can you provide me information, and maybe you have it handy, the names of the organizations that are funded through this parent-aid program and provide that kind of services, as well as your appropriation this year for these organizations and the increase over last year? Or give me last year's number and this year's number, and I'll work out my own percentage.

Mr. Birkbeck: — Mr. Chairman, I wonder if just while the minister is looking for that answer, if I might have leave to introduce some students.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Birkbeck: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure today to introduce some students to yourself, Mr. Chairman, and to other members of the Assembly, on behalf of the member for Cut Knife-Lloydminster. I understand that there are some 24 in number, grade 6 students, seated in the Speaker's gallery. They have been on a tour of the legislature which I'm sure they enjoyed

and, likely, I would think that they're going to be touring other facilities in the capital city.

I want to welcome you here, and I trust that you'll enjoy the proceedings of the House. We're in committee of finance right now, doing estimates. And I will be meeting with the group later today and having a discussion with them and making sure that they have pictures taken, and so on. So I'd ask members to join with me in welcoming them here on behalf of the member for Cut Knife - Lloydminster.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Social Services Ordinary Expenditure - Vote 36

Item 1 (continued)

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — My apologies for taking so long. The problem is that the organizations that provide the parent-aid program, they also deliver other services, and to actually, you know, pick out the appropriated dollars going just to parent aid — we can do that for you, but it will take some time, unfortunately.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I appreciate that. Just to simplify your work, because what I'm really wanting to find out is: one, who the organizations are — and part of that is because I would like to know, and part of it is because it gives me and others an opportunity to refer people who ask. So I want to know who they are.

And for the purposes of budget and the funding, if you give me the global figure of how much . . . and if you don't have it right now, you can give that to me later today so we can go on to the next item here. But if you give me the amount of budget provided for parent-aid program, the global budget for '86 - 87 and what it was for '85 - 86, that would be sufficient, and if you will give me an undertaking that you will give that to me some time later today, that would be okay.

(1530)

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Are you just talking about parent aid or are you also talking about crisis intervention; are you talking about parent therapists. There are a number of things that are closely related here, and if we just try and give you parent aid, it'll take some — I don't know if we can get that by 5 o'clock. What we could give you is crisis intervention dollars, preventive dollars for families and organizations, and they will include things like Peyakowak; like the Riel Local No. 33 in Regina; like the society for the protection of children in Saskatoon, those kinds of organizations. We will try and be as specific as we can, and I hope that's adequate.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — That's be adequate. I'm assuming you will include in that — part of what you describe includes counselling as provided to parents and families and so on and if it includes that, that would be sufficient for my purpose.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I think we're talking about those kinds of things, the Dene Kwan in La Loche, for example, that provides counselling; it's not just parent aid, there's a spectrum of services provided, and we'll get that to you as soon as we can.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, let me refer to another item here. For several years now your government has been working on a new family services Act. I know that a number of people have approached me about it and have expressed various concerns and in fact last year you reported — and I'm looking at a quote from *Hansard* here — that the introduction might be in the fall of 1985 or the spring of 1986 which we're in now. Because, in your words, there was a lot of work and consultation that had to be done. Are you proposing, or are you planning, to introduce a new family services Act in this session as you indicated last year you might do?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — No, it's not my intention to introduce a new family services Act this particular session. It may be possible that that will come about this fall. We are dealing with some very complex kinds of issues — consultation still continues. We do receive communication from individuals. This past year I have been involved in consultation with people.

The issues are very complex and if the member wants to take some time, I certainly would be prepared to discuss some of those particular issues with him. I'm hopeful that we can have an updated Act that balances off the rights of parents with the need to protect children who really are in need of protection, as soon as possible. I think there's a general concurrence within Saskatchewan's society that the present Family Services Act is in need of reform. And as I indicated, it will not be in the next two or three weeks, but it may be later this fall.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I agree that the present Act is a very old Act, but I also agree with you that in its restructuring, a lot of, I guess we could call, sensitive issues have to be considered. And I don't mean sensitive in a pejorative sense in any way, and I'm sure you're aware of that. Can you inform the committee, Mr. Minister, do you have any formal process by which you are carrying out these consultative processes or are you just . . . if people happen to hear that you're planning to introduce some legislation, they have to come to see you, or have you structured any formal process by which people are able to find out what it is you're intending to do and in which they can respond?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — The formal consultation process commenced some time back and went on for a good period of time. And that of course was related to the ministerial advisory council on child protection. As a consequence of their report being released, there was a large number of groups and organizations that I met with personally to discuss possible changes. There was a paper that was issued, and as a consequence of that paper there were other organizations that wrote in suggesting additional changes. There were some organizations that requested meeting with me personally.

We have been through what you could call, I suppose,

the formal consultation phase. However, I am still in a position of being willing to, and indeed wanting to, meet with any particular organization that does want to provide some input into this very important piece of legislation. And I know there are native organizations that have obvious concerns in this particular regard, and there are others besides those particular groups.

So the formal consultation process, while it has come to an end in terms of public hearings and reports and white papers being released, that doesn't mean that the consultation process itself has come to an end. And if you're aware of any particular group or individual who wishes to meet, I would certainly be prepared to accommodate them.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I'll move on. I'm satisfied that you've answered what I wanted to know there. And indeed, as people come to me I will discuss it with them and in fact refer them to you.

I want to ask you some questions about the Saskatchewan assistance plan program which is jointly funded by both the provincial and federal governments. Can you tell the committee, Mr. Minister, how much was spent under the Saskatchewan assistance plan for 1985 - 1986?

I ask that because you budgeted 192.894 million, but I think there was a supplementary also. Can you give me the total figure that was spent in 1985 - 1986? I think it was more than what you had budgeted for.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Yes, there was a special warrant, and the expenditure was in the order of 196.5 million.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — It seems that something changed during the year. There obviously was an increase in the number of people who had to apply for the Saskatchewan assistance plan. What were you able to attribute this very substantial increase, Mr. Minister? What went wrong between the time when the budget expenditures were finally completed and the time when you were planning your initial estimate?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — For the information of the member opposite, the average case-load per month actually went down in '85 - 86 by a 2.7 per cent decrease. The average cost per case went up, so that there was an increase overall in budget of 1.9 per cent, but the average case-load per month went down during the year.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, those are somewhat misleading figures. Your average case-load may have gone down, but the number of people who became dependent on welfare, or SAP (Saskatchewan assistance plan), actually increased, and you know that, Mr. Minister, over that period of the year.

Mr. Minister, you spent \$196.7 million on SAP in 1985 - 1986. In 1981 - 1982, \$105.2 million was spent on SAP. You have had a n increase — a very substantial increase over that period of time. You budgeting now . . . Let me carry it further. In '81 - 82, \$105.2 million was spent on SAP. In 1984 - 85, \$187.8 million was spent on SAP because your number of people dependent has been increasing, because certainly the amount of benefits you

pay have not been increasing. In 1985 - 1986, \$196.7 million was spent on SAP, a continuing increase in the amount you've expended. And yet, Mr. Minister, in the 1986 - 87 estimate, you only estimate \$190.8 million.

Can you explain how you can be budgeting for only \$190.8 million when over the term of your government there's been a continuing increase? Are you planning already that you're going to have to go and get a supplementary estimate to pay for money that you have not budgeted for?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well over a period of four or five years, since we pay actual utility costs in the province and utilities increase over a period of time, then naturally the expenditures for utilities are going to increase as well under the SAP system.

In addition to that, special needs items, they naturally increase in cost per item over time. And so you're going to spend more today, in 1985, to buy a stove or a fridge or who knows what, for a particular client, than you would have back in 1982. So those kinds of items increase.

In addition to that, there was a rate increase three years ago in the province of Saskatchewan, and that rate increase naturally has to be factored in over a two- or three-year period of time.

So all of those items naturally are going to increase your expenditures. And as well, there of course has been an increase in the case-load, as there has been right across Canada during the '82-83-84 period of time.

But I'm pleased to inform the member and the people of Saskatchewan that we are showing a decrease in the number of people on social assistance today, in comparison to last year. And in addition we are spending far more money today on things like education and training initiatives than were ever spent before.

So we're headed in the right direction. And the kinds of things that I indicated, in terms of increasing utility costs and special needs and rate increases, certainly have a significant bearing on the amount of money that you're going to spend over time.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well I might agree with you, Mr. Minister, that utility increases have been very dramatic under the term of your government and have affected not only people who are on SAP, but also others as well. I think everyone who may be watching this deliberation of these estimates will testify to that.

Mr. Minister, you have just made the argument that I have been trying to make. The argument is that your estimate of the amount that you're proposing to spend on SAP is not an accurate estimate. You have said just now to the committee, utility costs have increases, special needs expenditures have increases — and I'm going to ask you about some of them in a moment or two.

(1545)

All of the things you have said, and you very conveniently forgot to say and tell the House how many people who

are dependent on SAP, how much of an increase there has been there. But all of those comments you have just made show that your estimate of 190.8 million for this year, compared to the 196.7 million you spent last year, is not an accurate estimate, and it's simply being used here as a cosmetic figure to help the Minister of Finance with his budget. How can you argue what you have just argued and still say that \$190.8 million is going to be sufficient to meet the needs?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well the case-load is dropping. I just indicated that, and I think that's very significant. I think that's something that we can all be very encouraged by. The case-load is dropping. The efficiencies that we have brought into the system in terms of welfare reform are having a significant impact. And I might add that, had we not taken the welfare reform initiatives that we did, I understand that we would have spent tens of millions of dollars more on social assistance than would have taken place previously. I think the public would be interested to know that.

As well, I think it's important for the member to play fair ball when he's comparing statistics. I understand that in '81 - 82 the budgetary statistics that you referred to did not include the DNS appropriation, and there are some fairly significant dollars there which of course came into the global budget.

So I'm encouraged by what we see in terms of the case-load reducing, in terms of the education and training initiatives that we are providing to people in Saskatchewan on a magnitude, I might add, that never took place previously. And I suspect that the members opposite never even thought about the possibility of providing that education and training. And I hope that you will stand in your place and say that you do support those education and training initiatives.

I was speaking to a group of people today in Fillmore, Saskatchewan; in fact, that they were representative of a number of municipalities around the province who were very encouraged to hear of the kind of training initiatives — education, job opportunities, job training — which are being provided to people on social assistance today.

And I think that's the way to go. I think, if you take a look at the record of governments across North America, regardless of the political stripe that they are characterized by, that they are all saying that we need a better approach to welfare rather than just handing out a cheque, and it has to include things like education and training, which we are doing.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Minister, let's talk about case-load because I think you're side-stepping the issue here, in spite of your well-often-stated efforts about education and training, all of which I'm prepared to support. But I'm going to qualify my support — and the qualification of my support that it's real training that you're providing and not simply trying to play with the statistics, which in fact you have done.

And I will be asking you some questions in a little while about the kind of games you have been playing with these people who you supposedly have found jobs for, but only

found them jobs long enough so that they could qualify for unemployment insurance. And then you drop them and you say: oh isn't this a great job we have done; we have reduced the number of people on SAP. But, Mr. Minister, you have not, in fact, reduced the number of people who are dependent on SAP.

And let me tell you the sad story of what's happened since your government was elected. The total number of people on welfare in Saskatchewan in January of 1981 was 43,428. The total number of people dependent on welfare since your government has taken over has increased dramatically, so that in January of 1986 — and I'm using the same month in each term — but that total number is now 62,386, an increase from the 43,000 back in 1981. This is an increase, Mr. Minister, of 43 per cent. The total number of people on welfare in Saskatchewan due to unemployment in January of 1981 was 5,868; the total number of people dependent on SAP in Saskatchewan due to unemployment in January of 1986 is now 14,008. That's an increase of people who are on SAP because of unemployment of 1138 per cent. How in Heaven's name, Mr. Minister, you can be proud of that kind of a record, I really find it very difficult to understand.

The total number of people who are dependent on SAP due to insufficient earning power by the family, because SAP also provides some assistance in that capacity, it was 3,717 in January of 1981; it has increased to 9,700 — again a reflection of the policies of your government which have increased the amount of poverty and the extent of poverty in the province of Saskatchewan.

And you stand in the House, Mr. Chairman, and you brag about this kind of effort on the part of your administration. Quite frankly, I would be ashamed to even stand up and try to defend that kind of record. That is not something to be proud of.

Now you say, well, in this year we've had a decrease in the case-load. Well I have your own monthly statistical bulletin for March of 1986, Mr. Minister, and that temporary bubble you had is now gone, because in the month of March it is well known by that time the economy should be able to absorb some people in employment because of construction pick-up and so on. Well, what's happened, what's happened between February and March of this year? Fully employable people who are dependent on SAP has increased from February, 14,691 to 14,818. You have had an increase in dependency, Mr. Minister. Partially employable — and I'll only deal with those — the fully employable and the partially has increased from 6,641 to 6,697. So in the areas of fully employable people who are unemployed, and partially employable, you have seen, from February to March, an increase in the numbers of people who have had to become dependent on SAP.

Now it's true you've had a modest decrease in the unemployable category. I will admit to that. But in your total figures, Mr. Minister, according to your own statistics from which I am reading, between February and March of this year you have had an increase from 30,629 people who are dependent on SAP to 30,802 who are dependent on SAP.

In light of those figures, Mr. Minister, would you not agree that your \$190.8 million estimated budget, which is a decrease from what you spent last year, is an inaccurate budget?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Chairman, for October '85, the case-load was lower than October '84, and for every month thereafter, November '85, lower; December, '85, lower; January '86, lower; February '86, lower; March '86, lower; and it is on that basis that we project what we do.

But the member opposite talked about the particular training initiatives as somehow being a scam. And that's the question you asked first. That's the question you asked first. You said you wanted real training — real training. Well the SEDP (Saskatchewan skills development program) program certainly have provided a substantial degree of education and training that was not there previously. Now some of the SEDP programs of course are with municipalities and with non-profit corporations, as you funded. AS we fund . . . and of course your organization, your government, had some of those particular projects as well.

An Hon. Member: — You'd never admit it.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well governments everywhere do. And I have before me here a list of a large number of letters that I would be happy to read into the record — but I don't think we want to take the time to do that — from organizations that have indicated how pleased they are that they have received this particular kind of funding.

But what the member opposite does not seem to want to admit is that for a good number of social assistance clients, that particular job experience has not only enhanced their self-esteem, has not only increased their skill level and therefore enhanced their competitiveness in the job market, but it has in fact created permanent employment for them.

And I would only refer the member to the project on south Albert here in the city of Regina, at Mr. Lube at south Albert. And I think the member is familiar with that particular kind of an operation, an operation where people drive in and have their oil changed by competent individuals who have been trained to change the oil in vehicles, something which the public wants, a service that they're very happy to have. And through part of our program, we were able to provide employment for, I believe, six individuals who previously were on social assistance. And it wasn't that long ago that I talked to the manager at Mr. Lube on south Albert, and he indicated to me that a significant number of those former social assistance clients are still working today, permanently, at that particular job.

Now I think that's — for me anyway — an indication that welfare reform is successful, that it does provide people with the kind of opportunities that they want. It enables them to become more competitive in the job market, to secure gainful employment. And I think all members, regardless of which political party we belong to, would agree that is the kind of thing that governments

should be doing.

Now not every job is going to be a permanent or long-term. There are going to be some kinds of short-term jobs. But we find that the people that are involved in those are very pleased to have the opportunity to be working. We naturally wished that everyone had a permanent job, and that is the ideal. Unfortunately that is not the case in Canada today, and consequently governments do believe that it is important to provide short-term employment.

We believe that very strongly and are so doing today on a magnitude that is very, very significant in the province. So whether it's the Crisis Nursery in Saskatoon that was able to staff up; or whether it is some organization in northern Saskatchewan that is providing employment for native people; or whether it's Mr. Lube on south Albert; or, I would draw to the attention of the member opposite, the Supercart manufacturing firm here in Regina that is going to be providing employment for a large number of people on social assistance — and a good number of those jobs will likely become permanent as the manufacturing process gears up.

(1600)

Now with every initiative of government there are going to be some deficiencies, there are going to be some things that one could wish could be done better. But I think when you compare the training record of this government to the training record of the former government, then certainly there has been a substantial increase in initiative and forward-looking thinking on the part of efforts to get people off of social assistance.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, you have now performed your usual trick. You totally avoid the issue here. Nobody's arguing about training programs. Most people would support the idea of providing education and training and indeed providing on-the-job training.

The point we're making here today, Mr. Minister, is that the policies of your government have increased the number of people who are dependent on SAP, or welfare, from 43,000 back in 1981 of January to well over 60,000. Especially since you have been making all these arguments about how well your economic policies has been doing, those figures, Mr. Minister, are really devastating. They prove one thing. They prove that your policies have been a failure.

Now, Mr. Minister, after having finished your speech totally unrelated to this issue, you forgot to answer the question. And the question was that, in light of the fact that there is such a dramatic increase during your administration in the number of people dependent on SAP, how can you justify your budget for SAP which is only \$190.8 million compared to \$196.7 million which you spent last year?

The number of people on SAP is increasing — already it shows a trend between February and March — and yet you have reduced your budget. I submit, Mr. Minister, that this is simply another way that you and your Minister of Finance play games with the people's money, putting one set of figures in your estimate and knowing full well

that you're going to spend something else. You are misleading the taxpayers of this province of Saskatchewan, and that's really quite unacceptable.

Now will you answer the question? And it's an important question because the amount you spend on welfare has increased by \$91 million in the last four years, or 86 per cent. And I'll tell you, Mr. Minister, it's not because you've been much more generous. It's because of the increased numbers of people who've become dependants.

Now will you answer the question: how you can justify your estimate under the subvote of Saskatchewan assistance plan when it's substantially less than what you spent last year, especially in light of the fact that the number of people that are on SAP is now beginning to increase again?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Chairman, I did answer that question partially before, but there are a number of things that need to be mentioned in response to that particular question.

We are in the process of finalizing negotiations with the federal government to make it possible for a much higher percentage of our social assistance clients to be involved in direct job experiences under the federal government job program. And that is something that didn't happen previously, and it's this government which I believe has been very successful as we anticipate finalizing those negotiations and reaching an agreement.

The second thing is, of course, we have instituted a number of efficiency measures and welfare reform measures, for example, our mandatory cheque pick-up and our mandatory self-declaration forms. And we, of course, want to ensure that those people who truly are eligible for social assistance receive it. But I certainly make no apology to anyone for also taking initiatives to ensure that if someone is not eligible for social assistance that they don't receive it. That, of course, will save dollars.

In addition, I indicated to the member opposite that since October '85, every month since then, the case-load has been lower than the year previous. So when you roll all of those things together, I think you have a very adequate rationale for the budget figure that we have taken.

I would also inform the member that the follow-up study on our pre- and post-employment dependency I think will be of interest. Initial results show that the average length of time on assistance prior to placement was 6.5 out of 12 months, or 11.2 months over a 24-month period. This indicates that the job program is providing a job placement to those individuals that did have a marginal attachment to the labour force and had established a social assistance dependency.

During the nine months following job placement, 60 per cent did not return to social assistance at all, and of those returning to social assistance the average time on assistance was two months or less.

So the greatest impact regarding the break in dependency

we found was in the singles group of whom 85 per cent did not return for assistance. So I think the efforts that we have taken to provide direct job experiences, whether they are short-term, medium-term, long-term permanent jobs are, in fact, paying off; and that attachment to the labour force, whether it's engendered through that short-term job creation programs or through long-term programs such as what we see at Mr. Lube on Regina South, or Supercart here in Regina, those things are very positive. And I'm certainly pleased to hear the members opposite stand in their place and say, yes, we applaud the members of the government in their efforts to move people off of social assistance, although I must confess I didn't hear much applause from the member from Regina North East, although I'm sure in his heart of hearts he is encouraged by what he sees taking place in the province of Saskatchewan today compared to what took place in terms of education and training four or five years ago when his government was in power.

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Minister, I wanted to pick up a related theme. Mr. Minister, I note in going through the monthly statistical bulletin from the Saskatchewan Social Services that over the last three years — two years — the growth in those on unemployment has been almost all in the employable sector. It appears that the number of unemployable people has gone down; the number of partially employable people has gone down; the huge increase in the number of those on welfare, Mr. Minister, has been in the category of fully employable. I refer you to page 2 of the March edition.

Mr. Minister, I think members of this caucus would dearly love the opportunity to applaud your job creation efforts. The problem is there's not much to applaud, and not much that's been very effective, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, you have mentioned a couple of projects. Overall though, I think the vast majority of Saskatchewan people, while they don't fault you for creating this recession, they do fault this government for having done nothing effective about it.

Mr. Minister, with the growth in the welfare rate being almost entirely in the category of employable, how is it that the minister can claim such a runaway success with respect to job creation? I would have thought that this would have suggested to you that a little something more might have been in order. But to listen to the minister talk, the economy's just run away with itself. Somehow or other, Mr. Minister, I think the 40,000-odd unemployed don't share your unbridled enthusiasm for the Saskatchewan economy.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you will not admit that your job-creation efforts have not made much of a dint in the welfare roles. Since we cannot get into the rolls of the unemployed, but we can spend some time on the welfare rolls, I wonder if you'd not be prepared to admit, Mr. Minister, that your efforts with respect to job creation have not made much of a dint in the welfare rates. The welfare rates have increased precisely because it is the employable, the number of employables, which has gone up so dramatically.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Chairman, I'm sure that we are all

most interested in seeing more and more people secure employment. I think that's a goal that all governments share, regardless of their political stripe. And I think that it is significant, for example, that the single employable case-load, 1984 - '85 compared to '85 - 86, saw a reduction each month compared to the year previous, whether it was in April when there were 536 fewer; in May there were 1,004 fewer. You come down to recently: January, 579 fewer; February, 614 fewer; March, 678 fewer, with the average, over the last year, 603 fewer.

So clearly we're moving in the right direction. When you take a look at the labour force statistics in the province of Saskatchewan and you see that the number of people who are employed today ... I have the April '86 figure here, 452,000, and when you compare that back to April, 1982, and you see the substantial increase in the number of people that are working in the province today, then clearly, I think, there has been a significant increase in the number of people that have jobs, the number of people who are working.

I think we can all be encouraged that Saskatchewan continues to have the second lowest unemployment rate in the country. We're naturally not encouraged, I'm not personally encouraged when I see any individual that is out of work that would like to work. And so the kinds of things that we have been doing here in Saskatchewan recently over the last year or two to enhance employment opportunities, I think, are very significant, whether it's the oil upgrader here in Regina, the new rehabilitation hospital here in Regina, the additions at the Regina General Hospital, the Gainers bacon plant in North Battleford, the new pulp-mill, paper-mill in Prince Albert — all of those kinds of things are projects that are very significant that will certainly provide a lot of long-term employment opportunities for Saskatchewan people.

And of course not all of the significant increase in the number of people working can be attributed to government projects. On the contrary. The small-business sector in Saskatchewan is the single most important sector that is going to create jobs. And when you take a look at the number of people that are working there today in various aspects of that particular sector, we find a significant increase.

So I think people in Saskatchewan are going to, of course, decide whether or not they want the big-government approach of the NDP, which was to spend my dollar and their tax dollar to buy uranium mines, even though that didn't create one new job; or to buy potash mines, we even thought that didn't create one new job; or to buy land for their government-owned land bank, even though that didn't create one new job; or whether or not they want the kind of forward-looking initiatives which this particular government has adopted.

And I think that they will see that we have a vision for the future of Saskatchewan which is building on our strengths, whether it's pulp- and paper-mills, or whether it's the bacon plant, or whether it's the oil upgrader here in Regina, whether it's the ammonia plant that's going to be attached to it. There are all sorts of things that indicate that this particular government does have a plan for the future which will provide employment opportunities for

Saskatchewan people.

And when I ask people: well, what do you think the NDP would do if they were in power in terms of providing jobs? there's this deadly silence, and they're not too sure exactly what would happen. Because they remember the buying of potash mines and the buying of land bank land and the buying of uranium mines, and they remember that those things, in fact, don't create jobs.

I can recall, Mr. Chairman, the candidate who's running against me in my particular constituency for the NDP party. His approach to job creation is for the government to nationalize all the potash mines. Now if anyone can explain to me how in the world we're going to create one new job by taking millions of taxpayers' dollars to buy out all of the rest of the potash mines that presently aren't owned by the government, then I would remain unconvinced. I don't think that spending taxpayers' dollars to nationalize off of the potash mines is going to create any jobs at all.

The NDP candidate running against me wants the government to set up a government-owned construction company — a government-owned construction company which would bid against all of the privately owned construction companies in the province. Now how in the world setting up a government-owned construction company is going to create jobs in the province of Saskatchewan is beyond me.

(1615)

I suppose I shouldn't be surprised, however, that this is the approach that people in the NDP party want to use to create jobs.

An Hon. Member: — He's off the topic.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — He's not off the topic; this is right on the topic. We're talking about job creation; we're talking about getting people off of social assistance into the employment market. And that particular NDP candidate is a founding member of the committee for an independent socialist Canada.

Well we shouldn't be surprised that a founding member of the committee for an independent socialist Canada wants to nationalize all the potash mines, wants to set up a government-owned construction company. That's not the way to create jobs in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Shillington: — I just want to know, Mr. Chairman, if we're all going to have the latitude to talk about the idiosyncrasies of our opponents. I just want to know if the same rules are going to be applied to the opposition as to the government.

If they are, I'm prepared to sit silent and let the minister talk as long as he wants about his opponent's views with respect to potash mines and uranium. But if the same rules aren't to be applied, then I would suggest that you call the minister to order. He has been out of order, I

suggest, for the last five minutes.

Mr. Chairman: — The minister, in his remarks, was attempting to show how employment opportunities would perhaps alleviate the welfare situation in the province. I would agree that, in talking about that, I believe he was straying from the rules of debate when he brought into it the candidate opposing him. But other than that, I believe he was on the topic.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly the issue of creating employment in Saskatchewan is a very broad-ranging issue. And I think that the people of Saskatchewan are going to want to know what the strategies of the provincial government are concerning job creation, and I have indicated those.

And the public will want to compare those strategies to those of the members opposite. And they will want to know which of those particular strategies are going to be most successful to see the numbers of people on social assistance decline in the future.

And I think the case I made, that bigger government, nationalizing potash mine and uranium mines and setting up government-owned construction companies, is not the way to get people off the social assistance. And I certainly stick by that.

And I think, when I talk to people in my constituency about those kinds of initiatives coming from an NDP government, they sort of shake their head, and they're a little concerned about the kinds of things that are being proposed.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman, indeed the people of Saskatchewan are going to be, and are, more than interested in the strategies because . . . And I'm sure that they will compare. And they're comparing now.

As a matter of fact, because they've been comparing now for the last year, and more than the year — two, three years — this government has known what their decision has been, and it has refused to call an election. That's how ashamed, Mr. Chairman, are that minister and his colleagues are about their failure to create work for Saskatchewan people.

Yes, people will compare. People will compare this open-for-business rhetoric, which is what they call a strategy, which has become a dismal failure in the province of Saskatchewan, to the kind of levels of unemployment that existed prior to the election of this government in 1982.

Since this government was elected, unemployment has more than doubled in Saskatchewan. That is what people of Saskatchewan are going to compare. Since the election of this government, Mr. Chairman, the number of people who have been forced to become dependent on welfare has increased by 43 per cent.

Now that is what has happened because of the employment strategies of this government. And even of more particular importance, Mr. Chairman, the number of people, who are employable, has increased by 138 per

cent because of this employment strategies of this government. And the number of people who had to not only work but have to rely on Saskatchewan assistance to supplement their income, you know, Mr. Chairman, that has increased by 162 per cent under the term of this government. Now that, Mr. Chairman, is what has resulted from the open-for-business employment strategy of this government.

Now on the even of an election, all of a sudden we hear announcements about this project and that project and another project. My question would be: why has it taken four years to get around to those announcements, except that indeed there is about to be an election and the government knowing that the public, the tax-paying public of Saskatchewan, have caught on to their kind of trickery and deception and is ready to turf them out of office. And in order to try to save their political hide, they now, on the eve of an election, are making announcements which no one can be sure whether they'll ever see the light of day because when they're asked in this House to provide information, they continuously, day after day, refuse to table it and provide any information.

I say to you, Mr. Minister, the public will not be fooled by that kind of political nonsense which you are trying to perpetrate on the process of government in Saskatchewan. How you can boast about your record in light of all of these statistics, which are completely contradictory of what you say, I don't know. And I suppose it doesn't matter whether I know or not, the fact is that the public knows and they're ready to pass judgement.

If you were not concerned about your dismal record, I would submit you would have had the election, and the only reason your government hasn't called it is because you know you're in trouble, otherwise you would have called it by now. And if you wanted to do it on the basis of the jobs that you have created, you know very well that you will elect very few members because nobody will believe you, because everyone in Saskatchewan knows somebody who's been laid off, someone who is in their family somewhere who has been laid off or has lost a job. And when you look at some of these, Mr. Minister, it is difficult to really understand how you would even dare to try to defend what you have been saying.

I give you another figure — and I'm going to deal with March of 1985, and there's been an increase since then. But the total number of beneficiaries of income assistance programs in Saskatchewan

— that's people who have had to be assisted in their income because they either don't make sufficient income or don't make any — is 231,000 people. Now that is an increase of over 50,000 since March of 1981. That is the result of your job creation program, Mr. Minister, and it really has been a program of failure and you know it. These aren't statistics that I have dug out of the air. They come out of your own documents and they come out of Statistics Canada.

Let me look at another aspect of your dismal record, Mr. Minister. Between March of 1985, and last month, and the month before, Saskatchewan's job creation record was eighth in all of Canada. And the only two other

provinces that had a worse job creation record were those of Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, and you know the kind of circumstances economically that they face. We have now had a net out-migration of people out of Saskatchewan in the last half a year.

All of those indicators show that in spite of your well-sounding rhetoric you have accomplished nothing. The only thing you have accomplished is cause more people in this province to become poor and have less income that they need to have to support their families. The only thing you have accomplished is cause more people to go on welfare because there are no jobs for them. And then some of your programs for training have been good, but others, Mr. Minister, you simply use — you simply use — to try to hide your dismal figures on the SAP rolls. You cannot tell this committee that by creating a job creation program that lasts 22 to 26 weeks, which you were kind enough to provide me in response to a letter which I wrote to you, that that is nothing more than simply an attempt to get people working long enough on minimum so they get unemployment insurance, so the federal government looks after them, and you can say, we help people get off welfare.

If you help them, fine, but please, Mr. Minister, show some compassion and don't punish them for the failure of your government's economic policies, because that's what you're doing. You're trying to generalize publicly and scapegoat people, because you know it may be popular in some of your red-necked circles. And we object to that, and I certainly object to that. That is not the way for a caring society to look after its poor.

Mr. Minister, you said, in an earlier response to a question which I asked, that one of the reasons why the costs of paying out SAP have increased is because many of the personal and household or personal allowances that you have made have increased. Mr. Minister, can I ask you: when were last the personal and household allowances changed or increased?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite made a number of points that deserve a response, and I would first of all deal with the welfare reform initiatives.

I'm surprised — and I suppose I shouldn't be surprised, but I guess in one sense I am — that I have yet to hear a public statement from any of the members opposite. I do recall that the Leader of the Opposition, when he was pushed on budget night, he indicated that yes, welfare reform was a good idea. But he sure wasn't going to advance it himself unless he was forced into a corner. And then he admitted it and he scurried away from the issue quickly, not wanting to deal with welfare reform, I suspect, because he knew that somehow a traditional constituency of voters that support the NDP party were affected by welfare reform and he in some way did not want to enrage them or upset them.

Well I don't think that's what should determine social policy in the province of Saskatchewan. I think it's the soundness of the policy that should be looked at, not which particular electoral group is going to be favoured or not favoured by a particular policy.

We increased taxes on big corporations, and today they are the highest in Canada in Saskatchewan, not because we favour them but because we think they deserve to be taxed appropriately. And we also increased welfare reform initiatives in the province of Saskatchewan because we think it's appropriate to provide people with education and training opportunities to get off of welfare, which you people did not do to any significant degree, and at the same time we think it's appropriate to also ensure that people that are not eligible for social assistance don't receive it. And if you want to call that red-neck, if you want to call that not compassionate, if you want to call that not sound social policy, you go right ahead. I quite frankly aren't going to lose one night's sleep over that kind of an accusation.

I know that that's sound policy. You know that it's sound social policy as well. And if you had any kind of political courage you'd stand to your feet and you would support it. And you would say, yes, we should have implemented some of these things, but we never did. So I'm not surprised that you take the position on welfare reform that you do.

(1630)

As it relates to job creation projects in Saskatchewan, I want to list for the member opposite some of the things that this government is doing, some of the things that we began negotiations on two or three years ago that are now beginning to bear fruit, which your administration and the Leader of the Opposition, the former premier at that time, never even considered at all — never even dreamt about.

For example, the new paper-mill in Prince Albert. Was that proposed by an NDP government? Certainly not. What about the new Regina upgrader? Not proposed at all. The new Shand power project in Estevan, the new Rafferty and Alameda dams, the new fertilizer manufacturing plant in Regina which will be attached to the upgrader, the new technical school in Prince Albert, the new agriculture college complex in Saskatoon, the new MacKenzie art gallery and museum in Regina.

What about individual line service which will create hundreds of jobs in the province? What about the expansion of the rural gas distribution system? What about burying the power lines in rural Saskatchewan? What about the new health facilities across Saskatchewan — the new 1,500 new nursing home beds? What about the new rehab hospital? Many of these projects you people did not even consider. Others you considered and talked about, but you did not move on.

And I think the best example that I can think of was your talk, year after year after year, to somehow fix Regina's water situation, which would have created jobs for people. It took 11 years and nothing was done under your administration. Today, people in Regina have good drinking water, and jobs were created during the construction phase of that particular process.

What about the new meat processing facilities in North

Battleford and Saskatoon? A large array of projects that the NDP never thought about that today they are negative about, but they know full well that they should be supporting because they will create jobs for literally hundreds and hundreds of people here in the province of Saskatchewan.

The welfare rates here in the province remain the highest in Canada for families. There was the 6.5 per cent increase in 1983 here in Saskatchewan, and when you take a look at the rates in Saskatchewan, we certainly compare favourably. And when you take a look at the large amount of money — the large amount of money, the millions of dollars — that we are spending today to get people off of social assistance, whether it's through education or training, job preparation, or direct job experiences, I think we're adopting the appropriate line that we should be taking.

In addition, there's the implementation of a \$20-per-month training allowance which will be taking effect later on this year for people who are on social assistance; and an increase in the maximum shelter guide-line in the various parts of the province.

So I think when you take a look at the overall record, you may want to increase social assistance rates in the province of Saskatchewan, and that's fine. You can make that recommendation. Some make that recommendation; others say, leave it where it is; others say, it's too high already. I think we need to find a reasonable balance. That's been my approach, and I think it's a reasonable and prudent approach of any government at this time.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, once again you didn't answer the question, in your usual and true tradition. Let me ask you this. If you are so convinced that your job creation has worked so well, and if you are so convinced that your so-called reform has worked so well, can you explain therefore why unemployment has more than doubled so it's well above 47,000; why the number of people who are employable has increased from 5,800 to 14,000 in the last four years?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well, the member knows that increases in social assistance cases in fact began to take place in the late '70s and early '80s; indeed under your administration, there were increases in the social assistance case-load. There have been increases in the last four or five years right across the country. I think we have to take a look at the large picture and see where Saskatchewan sits in comparison to the rest of the country.

When you take a look at the things that are happening in agriculture and in oil and potash and you take a look at the reductions in revenues there, and you take a look at the fact that Saskatchewan has still maintained its position as having among one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, then I think what you see is that the kinds of initiatives that we have taken are in fact appropriate for this particular time. Some of those initiatives are now beginning to bear fruit, and I've indicated that already in terms of single employables being reduced on the case-load.

Others of these initiatives will bear fruit as time goes by, whether it's the oil upgrader, or whether it's the paper-mill in Prince Albert, or the bacon plant in North Battleford, or whether it's the rehab hospital which is beginning to come on stream here in terms of significant construction activity in Regina. Certainly all of those initiatives are going to be significant in terms of providing employment for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, the total of employables has not been reduced. You're misleading the committee here. The total number of employables between February and March has increased. I'm reading . . . Would you please pick up a copy of your own publication which I have here — from March of 1986, the total number of employables have increased from 14,691 to 14,818.

Now, Mr. Minister, having stated that, I won't argue it. I simply want to ask you again because you didn't answer the question. If you have been so successful with all your so-called announced projects and other things which you are talking about in this committee, will you please try to explain why the unemployment has gone to around 47,000 in Saskatchewan, and why the number of people who are employable but instead of working are dependent on welfare, has increased by 138 per cent?

Wouldn't you say, Mr. Minister, that all of your efforts, or lack of them, in the last four years have been a dismal failure to cause this to happen? Because if you had been successful, these would not be the facts of life out there today; you wouldn't have over 260,000 people dependent in some way on assistance programs because of either having no work or because of having inadequate income because of low-paying jobs; or even more so because of more of the jobs becoming part time so that people can't make a living by the work that they do.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Chairman, the number of people working in Saskatchewan in 1982 was 427,000 in the summer of 1982. Today it's 452,000, so we have an increase of 35,000 people — 35,000 more people working today in Saskatchewan than in 1982.

So when you take a look at the increase in the number of people who are working today; when you take a look at the reduction in terms of people who are on social assistance; when you take a look at the drought which has hit Saskatchewan over the last two years; when you take a look at the reduction in commodity prices here in the province and throughout the world that this province has to deal with; when you put all of that together and you consider that Saskatchewan still has the second-lowest unemployment rate in the country, and among the highest benefits in terms of social assistance for people with families in Canada, then I think we're on the right track.

And when you go through the list of projects that I just read out for the member opposite, of the kind of things that we would be doing here in the province in the years to come, I think that any sound-thinking individual would say that yes, we are on the right track here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Minister, once again you make my own argument for me. You suggest that there are 35,000 more people working, but you fail to mention that there are 40,000 more people who are unemployed or are dependent on welfare. Even using your own statistics, Mr. Minister, there is a net decline in the number of people who should be working. The people who become either unemployed or who will become dependent on the welfare system has increased over 40,000, even though you say the number of jobs people are working at has increased by 35,000. The other thing you failed to say, in your usual way, is that a lot of those 35,000 jobs are part-time jobs — part-time jobs where people cannot make a living. And so once again you're simply trying to solve your political problem with askewing of statistics and not dealing with the issue that's there.

Mr. Minister, even your own constituents disagree with you. I have here a letter which you received not too long ago from the outreach committee of the Rosemont United Church. And this committee refers to a report submitted — prepared for you by a former employee of your department. It was called, "A Duane Adams report of productive welfare system for the 80's." And this group of people who are, I know, very well-meaning and concerned, asked you to consider these kinds of things that I have been speaking about in this committee. I ask you, Mr. Minister: how many of these recommendations of this Mr. Adams report of 1983 have you implemented since that time?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — There were a large number of recommendations that the Adams report put forward. We have responded to a good number of those recommendations. For example, the automation of the SAP system was one of the very significant recommendations brought forward by the Adams report. And we are carrying on with the implementation of a SAP automation system.

The availability and delivery of a much enhanced education and training program for welfare clients was one of the things that the Adams report recommended, which we have responded to. An increase in rates at that particular time was another example. So certainly we have responded to a number of the major recommendations of the Adams report.

The member opposite though, talks about part-time and full-time jobs. And I would simply remind him, if he does want to talk about part-time jobs, that he will want to compare the record — the three-year record; the NDP from October '79 to October '81 — 10,000 part-time jobs created under your administration and only 4,000 full-time jobs.

The same period of time for the Progressive Conservative government — 4,000 part-time jobs and 21,000 new, full-time, permanent jobs. So any way you want to cut it, any way you want to cut it, you see a significant difference — 4,000 full-time jobs there, 21,000 here; 10,000 part-time jobs over there and 4,000 here.

Now if you want to brag about part-time jobs, go ahead. You had the most — 10,000. We will rather focus in on

permanent full-time jobs, and there there's a significant difference, a very significant difference.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now, Mr. Minister, your so-called job creation program has resulted ... It's difficult for you to understand, so let me draw you a bit of an analogy that should be easy to understand.

Mr. Minister, there, as a result of your job creation efforts, now are over 60,000 people who are SAP recipients or dependent on SAP. Over 60,000. That's more, Mr. Minister, than the combined population of men, women, and children of the city of Estevan, Lloydminster, Melfort, Melville, North Battleford, Swift Current, Assiniboia, and Canora. That is the extent of the problem which you have created with your misguided policies.

Mr. Minister, I ask you again, and I won't make a long speech because maybe that'll make you stop making a speech and instead get you around to answering the question: how can you say that your job creation program has been so successful when unemployment has more than doubled, and with the number of people dependent on assistance programs is now at 261,000 in Saskatchewan?

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we're simply covering the same ground here, and I guess we're going to have to agree to disagree in some measure. I indicated that four years ago there were 427,000 people working in the province; today, 452,000 people working. That's an increase of 35,000 people and that's a very significant increase — 35,000 more people working today. And that is much in excess of the additional people who, for one unfortunate reason or another, were added to the unemployment rolls — much in excess. In fact it's almost three times as high.

So the kinds of things that I have been talking about that we will do in the future, that we are doing today, that we have done in the past, I think, are bearing fruit for Saskatchewan. And we look forward to continuing to have among the lowest unemployment rates in the country. We look forward to seeing the upgrader constructed here in Regina, and the bacon plant in North Battleford, and the rehab hospital here in Regina, and a number of other kinds of things that I have listed off for the member opposite. The kinds of things that we are doing, I think, are appropriate, and we will continue on with them.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Minister, I won't pursue this at a great deal of time longer except to state this: you may want to talk about all of what you pretend to be jobs created and ignore all of these other people who are hurting, which you are doing now all afternoon. You refuse to address the big issue here.

The issue is: that there are over 40,000 unemployed in Saskatchewan; that there has been an increase in the number of people who you are paying Saskatchewan assistance to from 43,000 to 62,000; that there has been an increase in the number of employables on the welfare rolls since January of 1981 from 5,800 to over 14,000;

that the number of people who in one form or another rely on assistance to supplement their incomes, assistance from the government, has increased to over 231,000 — I think I once said 261; I will correct that — 231,000.

You go off on your tangent and you refuse, in the true and tried and traditional way of all Conservative governments, totally ignore these people on the lower end of income scales, these people who are poor, and these people who in many ways are unable to defend themselves. You spent so much time worrying about the wealthy and the established and the powerful that even when you answer and respond to these kinds of questions, you ignore the needs of these unfortunate type of people.

Now I am not surprised, I am not surprised to hear you use that approach because that is the approach of all Conservative governments as long as history will record back — and the last one was in 1929, and that was their approach. Your approach in 1986 is not one single bit different than the Conservative government of 1929, and I want you to consider, Mr. Minister, what happened to that government, and consider whether, indeed, that may not happen to your government because of your callous approach.

Some people who have made representations to the city council of Regina have talked about the need for a declaration of war against poverty. And their comment simply was that the growing number of people under the Saskatchewan assistance plan indicates that the size of the war we, too, are fighting against poverty. You refuse to fight that war because you have other agenda. You're more concerned about the rhetoric of open for business than you are about the people in need, and I'm sure you'll agree with me, Mr. Chairman.

And, Mr. Minister, you talk about how the welfare rates in Saskatchewan are the highest, and in some categories, they may be. I want to ask you another specific question. Is Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, the only province in which . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'll wait until . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That was last time, member from Moosomin. I'm not sure I've got the minister's attention. In order that I don't have to repeat my question, I'll wait until he's ready.

Well, Mr. Minister, if you're listening, can you tell me if Saskatchewan is the only province which does not allow people who are on SAP to retain their family allowance in the calculation of their benefits?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Chairman, the increase in the number of beneficiaries receiving assistance under the NDP, the last year that they were in power, from March '81 to March '82, was in the order of 5,000 people in one year that received an increase in, or were an increased part of the welfare rolls — 5,000 people one year. So when you compare that to March '83 to March '86, in fact we see not as many per year on average being added to the welfare rolls as were added the last year that your particular government was in power. So I think certainly we're moving in the right direction — fewer people on assistance today, jobs being created.

And I've given you the list of the kinds of projects that we are bringing forward in Saskatchewan, now and in the future, that will benefit people that are on social assistance today who want to get off. And it's beyond me why you won't stand in your place and say, yes, we support the paper-mill in Prince Albert. One day one of your members stands up and says, it's the blackest day for the paper industry in the province. And the next day the Leader of the Opposition travels into northern Saskatchewan and he says, well, maybe it's a good thing. You have to be consistent.

And what I have consistently heard in this particular Assembly is that you're not in favour of that particular project which is going to help get people off of social assistance. And whether it's that project, or the Regina upgrader, or the new Shand power project, or the Rafferty and Alameda dams, or the fertilizing manufacturing plant, or the irrigation projects, or the individual line service, or buying of the power lines, or the health facilities here in Saskatchewan, the rehab hospital which you people talked about for a long time but never delivered on, whether it's the meat processing facilities in North Battleford which you do not want to support — all of those kinds of projects are going to provide jobs for people that are unemployed today and that are on social assistance.

That's a very compassionate approach, and I wish the members opposite would have the political courage to stand in their place and say, yes, we support those kinds of things. And I wish you would have the political courage to stand in your place and say, I don't want to see the government use taxpayers' dollars, or nationalize another potash mine because it won't create another job. And I wish you'd have the political courage to stand in your place and say, I don't want to see taxpayers' jobs used to set up a government-owned construction company which will bid against private contractors and force them out of business because I know that's not sound economic policy; and even though I'm a member of the NDP party, and even though one of my NDP candidate colleagues may support that, I don't. I wish you would have the political courage to stand in your place and say that.

I certainly support the kind of things that this government has been doing, is doing today, and will do in the future.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, will you answer the question? I asked you: is Saskatchewan the only province that deducts family allowance from the benefits; and if so, Mr. Minister, how can you make the argument that, for example, someone who has got two children, and a single parent, has still got the highest benefits in Canada?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — It's factored in. Even though that deduction does take place, we still are the highest in Canada for families.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — You still didn't answer the question. Is Saskatchewan the only province that deducts it?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Yes, we are the only province that does that. That was your particular policy when you were

in government under the NDP. We haven't changed that particular policy. The reason why we haven't changed it is because, even though you take that deduction into account, the welfare rates that we provide to families are still the highest in the country.

So if you would like us to change from the policy that you had when you were in power, then please make that recommendation. I understand that would cost the taxpayer in the order of some . . . I forget exactly how many millions of dollars more it would cost the taxpayer, and I'll get that for the member immediately — \$14 million more that the taxpayer would have to assume.

Now I suspect the taxpayer would rather see that \$14 million spent on the kinds of projects that we are talking about here, the kinds of project that I have just listed for you today, rather than to increase welfare rates for families which are already the highest in the country.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Here we go. Here we have a vivid example of your government's priorities. You don't have \$14 million for mothers . . .

An Hon. Member: — Look it, it's your policy.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — It may have been our policy, Mr. Member from Moosomin. Times change, and this government was supposed to do things so much better. What's gone wrong? It seems that we have gone the other way.

Mr. Minister, you cannot find \$14 million for mothers who are trying to raise their children based on the principle of the family allowance — you know what that family allowance is all about — but you can so easily find \$20 million for Peter Pocklington. That is the kind of priorities that you have, Mr. Minister, that the public of Saskatchewan is beginning to question.

Why, Mr. Minister, do you continue this policy when nowhere else in Canada is this policy in place? There must be a reason.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Chairman, the member talks about \$14 million not being available to mothers. Well I want to remind the member opposite that that was the policy under your administration, and instead of deciding to spend that money on welfare or somewhere else, you spent it nationalizing potash mines and uranium mines and buying land for the land bank, which certainly didn't help one mother in this province.

Now what has this government done? Well, we've taken the tax off of clothing, and I don't know why you didn't do that. We took the tax off gasoline, and there are a lot of mothers that drive a lot of kids a lot of miles in this province, and that has certainly reduced their costs. We took the tax off power bills and that has reduced the cost to families in this province. So if you want to talk about reductions and costs to families, then we can stand here for a long time and compare the spending priorities of your government as it related to families.

What about those families that were suffering with high interest rates — 18, 19, 20, 21 per cent? Did you lend a

helping hand at that time? Not one twit of money came out of the federal treasury to help mothers and families that were in difficulty then. Not one dime came out — not one.

Well it was this government that provided mortgage assistance to families to ensure that they had dollars in their pockets during that difficult time, and it's this particular government today that will continue to provide the kind of assistance to families that we believe in. We support families; you people supported Crown corporations, and there's a big difference.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.