

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Clerk: — I hereby present and lay on the Table the following petition:

By Mr. Swenson of Briercrest Bible College of Caronport, in the province of Saskatchewan.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Policy Concerning Department of Agriculture Leases

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Acting Minister of Agriculture, and it deals with the Premier's decision to suddenly adopt a new get-tough policy with the Department of Agriculture leases.

A few days ago he sent notices to 750 lands branch lessees telling them that if they didn't clear up their arrears payments by the end of this month, they would have their leases cancelled. What brought on this sudden get-tough policy and why has the Premier given these 750 lessees less than 30 days notice to come up with the money?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, I'm . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order. I'd like to ask the hon. members to refrain from hollering from their desks.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of the specifics of any new policy, and I would caution members to take at face value what we've heard. And I say that because simply based on history and my understanding of how lands branch has dealt with leaseholders, it's always been extremely fair. And the government policy has always been one of walking the extra mile — in fact I would argue, the extra two and three and four miles. I have no doubt that the policy is still consistent with those fair and responsible themes. And insofar as the details of the policy, I'll take notice on behalf of the Premier and we'll get the details for the hon. member.

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, I have a memorandum from the Premier to all government MLAs dated December 5, 1986, re lease arrears on Crown land. I am just going to read from this document . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Would hon. members please allow the member to ask his question without interference.

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saying that it isn't, and I'll quote the second paragraph:

It is not acceptable to allow lessees to continue farming leased land which is in serious long-term arrears. Therefore I have recently approved a policy, a copy of which is attached, which take a firm stand on leases which are in arrears. Lessees will be required to be no more than one year in

arrears by December 31, 1986. Failure to do so will result in further collection action including lease cancellations, where necessary.

I ask the minister why this government, when they have used the excuse of tough times as an explanation of a \$2.5 billion deficit, why aren't tough times in agriculture taken into account when it comes into land branch lease payments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt, as I said earlier, that lands branch's policy in terms of being fair and responsible and reasonable, given the economic conditions out there, the themes will still be the same in the policy.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that this government, this Premier, has recognized the hardships of the farmers out there, whether they be lands branch leaseholders or others. That is why we put in things like the \$25 per acre production loan, Mr. Speaker; that is why we have the oil royalty pass-back, Mr. Speaker; that is why our Premier lobbied for the billion dollar — and received I might add, Mr. Speaker — the billion dollar deficiency payment; that is why, Mr. Speaker, over the past two or three or four years perhaps — and I'd have to have my memory refreshed — that lands branch lease rates have been, in fact, frozen.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, when the record is examined in totality, you will find that our government has been not only responsible but extremely fair with the leaseholders of this province.

Mr. Upshall: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. That is the policy that seems to be a double route of action going here when on one hand we see, as you have stated, some of your policies; on the other hand we have the actual document that says the policies are paper. The facts are that we are seeing people being pressed, and hard pressed, to get rid of their leases.

Mr. Minister, do you not find it rather heartless, rather uncaring, for your government to give more than 750 farm families this kind of news a few days before Christmas? Do you not understand that these families have been given less than 30 days notice to come up with thousands and thousands of dollars at the worst possible time of the year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, once again I do not accept at face value what the hon. member is suggesting. I do know that there are opportunities for leaseholders and others facing financial difficulties to use such tools as the counselling assistance for farmers. It is very much a process that was put in place some good long time ago. It's proved very, very satisfactory to all parties, Mr. Speaker, and in fact I think we have a Bill before this House now where we are going to extend that provision because it has been one that's been useful to farmers.

And I could go on and on and on, Mr. Speaker, and talk about things like cash advances and, as I said earlier, the \$25 production loan, to provide the needed cash for farmers out there, whether they be leaseholders or others, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Variable Rates by Canadian National Railway

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to address my question to the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture. But in his absence I address it to anyone on the front bench who has the courage to stand up and answer this question and, more particularly, the Acting Minister of Agriculture.

And it deals with the report that the CN, the federal Crown corporation, is planning an application to introduce variable rates on our hard-pressed farmers here in Saskatchewan. It's indicated that this application for variable rates will have to be proceeded with by December 31st to be effective for next year's crop in August.

And my question to you: will you, in the absence of the Premier, the Acting Minister of Agriculture — will you give the commitment and assurance to the farmers of Saskatchewan that you, in fact, will fight against the introduction of variable rates, which in fact will have an adverse effect on the farmers throughout Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, we have been, and will continue to be, behind the farmers of Saskatchewan on this issue and others. I know I, and some other of my colleagues, have been before transportation committees, standing committees in agriculture, and various other sundry federal bodies that have dealt with this issue and others over the past four years, and will be with them again in the future.

As it relates to variable rates specifically, Mr. Speaker, our position would be unchanged. We have made our briefs, and forwarded our briefs, and stood behind our briefs, and presented our briefs in the past four years. Our view is unchanged that: (a) we're not against lower rates. In fact, we're in favour of lower rates, as we are in favour of any lower input costs for farmers, but we are in favour, Mr. Speaker, of lower rates at all points.

We don't want, if you like, the railways out there, on their agenda, designing how rural Saskatchewan should look like. We will have the farmers of Saskatchewan deciding how rural Saskatchewan should look, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — A supplement, Mr. Speaker, to the, I guess, Acting Minister of Agriculture. If indeed there are applications made by the CN, the Crown corporation — the one run by your colleagues in Ottawa — I want to ask you: are you prepared to go to bat for the farmers of Saskatchewan by, in fact, putting a submission before them opposing variable rates?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know if that issue has been dealt with yet in terms of our government deciding whether we will or will not, because I don't know if there's an application gone forward, but if there is one goes forward, our government will make the decision at that time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Koskie: — Further supplemental to the Acting Minister of Agriculture. I wonder, Mr. Minister, are you clear as to why the Mulroney government would even permit a Crown corporation which it controls, the CN, to in fact apply for variable rates? Have you put that question to the Mulroney government, that by the very allowance of the CN, a Crown corporation, making the first move for variable rates, there is an implied consent by the Mulroney government that they're in favour of variable rates? I ask you: have you been in contact with them, and have you put that proposition to them?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for the Mulroney government as to why they may or may not have done anything. If my memory serves me correctly, I think it was a Liberal government that was propped up by a half a dozen NDP MPs at the time and allowed . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order please. Please . . .

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — . . . and allowed that legislation, Mr. Speaker, to in fact become a reality in this country. My understanding of what the Mulroney government has done at our Premier's urging is to get, number one, a \$1 billion deficiency payment for farmers . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order, please. I ask the hon. member who asked the question in supplementary to please refrain from interfering as the minister is giving his answer . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Whether he is giving the answer that you like or not is beside the point. He has the right to give an answer to the question, and that's what he is doing. And he is not out of order. So I ask you to please allow him to answer the question.

Mr. Koskie: — A final supplemental, just in case the minister didn't hear the first supplemental that I asked him. And what I want to ask him: are you not concerned with the federal government, the Mulroney government, allowing a Crown corporation, the CN, to be the initiator of application for the variable rates? And does that not, in your view, as it appears to the public, be in fact an implied consent by the Mulroney government that they are in favour of initiating a position on variable rates? I ask you: have you been in touch with your federal counterparts, and will you take a strong stand to ask the Mulroney government not to initiate it through their Crown corporation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, his might be one interpretation; it may well not be mine or our

government's. As I said earlier, I think that legislation that probably allows for that provision was put in place by some others than Mulroney and, in fact, I suppose if we would have had our way at the time, maybe that legislation would never have been tampered with. Or certainly, if it was going to be amended, Mr. Speaker, it would have been amended based on the resolution, as I recall it, in this very legislature that enjoyed unanimous support, that is to say, both sides of the House outlining a certain number of principles, in fact, if it was going to be opened up.

Our lobbying with the federal government will continue, Mr. Speaker. I hope we enjoy the same sorts of successes as we have in the past. There are lots of serious issues facing Saskatchewan farmers today, and this is among them.

New Fiscal Regime for the Oil Industry

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Energy and I would like to ask the minister about an announcement that is presumably pending from her and from her department. The year is rapidly running out but this House remains in session. The Saskatchewan oil patch is anxiously awaiting an announcement from the minister about a new fiscal regime for the industry before the end of this year. I wonder if the minister can assure us that a specific announcement will be forthcoming from her, not only before the end of 1986 but while this House remains in session?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Speaker, the energy policies *per se* have been under review for about six weeks now, as the member well knows, and the commitment that was given to the oil patch was: (1) that a decision would be made before January 1, and it will be announced before that time. I cannot give a commitment that it will be announced while the House is in. I guess that depends on when the House sits and when it doesn't, but it will be made before January 1.

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Speaker, supplementary. I wonder if the minister could tell the House then, in the event that this announcement perhaps might come after the House has adjourned for Christmas — I wonder if the minister could tell us if she is looking at the kind of policy that would just be a simple extension of the royalty holiday approach that the government has pursued in the past, or will the approach be fundamentally different from that? And in her consideration, is she giving any serious thought to the establishment in Saskatchewan of some form of oil price stabilization scheme that might have been implied by some of the language used in the throne speech.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, Mr. Speaker, what we have been reviewing has been done in consultation with various associations of the oil sectors. Jobs is the first priority and will be taken into consideration on whatever policy is finalized. I can also tell the hon. member that we are looking at a structure that is price sensitive. And that will be the second component. The third will be that it must maximize investment for Saskatchewan people. So keeping mind jobs and investments, the decision will be taken for the best interests of Saskatchewan people

and the long term of the future.

Mr. Goodale: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the study has now been going on for some weeks and the deadline for an announcement is rapidly approaching, would the minister, if she cannot give a firm commitment on a date, could she at least assure this House that she will expend her very best effort to ensure that an announcement is in fact made while this legislature is still in session to hear it before the end of the year?

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I already stated I cannot give a commitment on the House sitting. I don't control that. Maybe he should be asking my good friend from Saskatoon Riversdale on that point. I can only assure the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg that the decision will be made before January 1st of '87.

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the minister would advise the House why she called a press conference and then cancelled it. And what aspects of the program were firm early last week and became unfirm last week so that you were unable to advise the public and the industry where your government stands?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that was done for personnel reasons, and I might add personal to that.

Resignation of Executive Director of Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, and it has to do with the resignation of Ms. Donalda Ford as executive director of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission.

I'm wondering whether the government has launched an extensive search for a new executive director and whether the position has been filled?

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — With regards to the resignation of Donalda Ford, I can advise the Assembly only that I was made aware of that by the chairman of the Human Rights Commission. The chairman of the Human Rights Commission and the board of the Human Rights Commission do their own research and their own recruiting as to who they're going to have employed with them, and they have nothing to do with me.

Ms. Simard: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister aware then whether the commission has recruited a new executive director?

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — I could check to be perfectly sure on that. As I understand . . . I met with the Human Rights Commission on Thursday and they indicated to me that there was a new person that they were hoping that would be approved for that position. Whether that is in fact the case, the person's name and background, etc., I could notice and get that information for you.

Ms. Simard: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister saying then that the approval is by cabinet?

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — As I understand, it still, by legislation, must be approved by cabinet. But what I can tell the hon. member is that it certainly is not a whole lot of concern to me. We look at the chairman of the Human Rights Commission and that board, and they will go out and recruit and hire whoever they want and we would then simply approve it.

Ms. Simard: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Will cabinet then be reviewing the appointment to ensure that this individual has experience, extensive experience in the area of human rights?

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Well I suspect that cabinet would probably review it in the event that perhaps a person would be seen as totally non-acceptable. But in the normal course I think what would happen is that the people that sit on the Human Rights Commission I think are for the most part very good, credible citizens. If they go out and do a search and come in with a recommendation, I would think it would have to be a very extraordinary type of recommendation for cabinet to do anything but simply to approve it.

Vacancies On Board Of Human Rights Commission

Ms. Simard: — New question, Mr. Speaker. I understand that two— the terms of two commissioners have expired, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering . . . and I also understand that the commission consists of seven commissioners and there's only five acting on it now. I'm wondering whether the government will be filling these positions soon, and I'm also wondering whether they will be appointing a native person since I understand there has been no native person on the commission for approximately two years.

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Well I can advise the hon. member that the government is responsible for several boards and commissions, I think something like 900 or 1,200 or something like that, and in the normal course those will come up for review.

What we will be doing in the first of the year is looking at many of those boards and commissions and the appointments of them, and try to find a proper balance on each of them; (a) we seek to try to get more women on various boards and commission, whether they're in crown corporations or something like the Human Rights Commission.

Native people is obviously another one you would look at. You'd look at ethnic background; you'd look at a whole host of things as you try to balance those things off. But what we will do is look at that early in the new year, along with many other boards and commissions, and try to fill those in a fair and proper way.

Staffing of Human Rights Commission

Mr. Mitchell: — My question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker, and it has to do with the recent decision of the Court of Queen's Bench quashing proceedings taken by the Human Rights Commission on the basis that there was

a four-year delay between the complaint being filed, and the completion of an investigation. And the judge in his judgement made reference to the fact that the commission is short-staffed and that steps should be taken to rectify that problem. And I'd like to ask the Minister: what steps have you taken to provide the commission with the additional staff required to make sure that this kind of thing doesn't happen again?

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Well I think we're taking as a given, the statement and the judgement of the judge which indicates that in this particular case there was an oversight in the investigation.

I met with the Human Rights Commission on this past Thursday. The information I had from the Human Rights Commission was as follows: that they had a tremendous backlog of cases that had not been dealt with, going back to the time of their appointment, 1982; that they have been pursuing to try to get that backlog up to speed so it's current. Their recommendation to me is if they could get two or three more investigators for a period of six months, they would be able to bring it current.

The particular case we're talking about here, that particular complaint was made in 1982 and was not investigated. And I think that is somewhat shoddy work. I raised that concern to the Human Rights Commission. They indicated that some investigators were in fact doing some shoddy work, that there were some replacements, that they're looking at getting proper investigators and a proper staff of investigators to bring it up to speed.

Their advice to me is that if they could have some part-time investigators for perhaps six months, bring everything up current, that they would be able to probably handle the case-load at the present budget levels.

Mr. Mitchell: — A new question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker, and this has to do with the comments made recently the chief commissioner of the Human Rights Commission. He urged that the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code be extended to protect people from discrimination based on mental disability, family status, or sexual orientation.

Does the minister agree with the chief commissioner, and are we likely to see such amendments to the code at the spring sitting?

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Well one would never want to speculate what you might see at the spring sitting. I could advise the hon. member that again that is not something that I would take as my own decision. It would be something that would go through the cabinet process and the caucus process. I could indicate to you perhaps in this way that at least one of those priorities could be dealt with this year.

Proposed Grasslands National Park

Mr. Calvert: — My question is to the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Water Corporation, and again it concerns the Grasslands park. I would like to ask the

minister if he is aware that 1987 marks the centennial of wildlife conservation in Canada, and does he not see the creation of a new Grasslands park as an appropriate way to note that centennial?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Yes, I'm aware that this is going to be the 100th anniversary. But sometimes there are things more important than just anniversaries in making decisions as to when a new park is to come into being.

I believe some of the members opposite will realize that the negotiating process has been ongoing for some time over the grasslands park. It's still in that process. And there are a number of things that are most difficult to get a solution to. At the proper time, that park will go forward, but it will not go forward until the people of Saskatchewan's interests are protected. And until that time I give no further promise.

STATEMENT BY MR. SPEAKER

Ruling on Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I'd like to bring forth my ruling regarding the point of order raised last Friday.

On Friday, December 19, 1986, the member for Regina Centre raised several points in a point of order concerning question period at which time I deferred my ruling.

The member asked questions on the following three points: the relevance of certain answers by the Minister of Health; answers made when taking notice of a question; and the role of the Chair in question period.

I have carefully reviewed the verbatim record of the question period to determine whether answers dealt with the matters raised. In several instances where the answers did not relate adequately to the matter raised, I called the minister to order at the time. I refer members to pages 378 and 380 of Friday's *Debates and Proceedings*. I find that the other answers given, while they may not have been what the questioner wanted, were within the practices of the House.

I want to re-emphasize that the Chair cannot insist that a minister must answer a question in a certain way. As long as the answer is relevant, it is in order even if the answer isn't the one the questioner was seeking. I define relevance in answers in the same broad way as in all debates in the Assembly. A remark is relevant if it deals with the topic raised. If members wish the Chair to apply the rules of relevance more strictly, I advise members to raise this issue with the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures.

With respect to the second point regarding lengthy answers being given when a minister takes notice of a question, I would like to outline the current practices in this matter.

In the early years, following the establishment of an oral question period, the practice was that when the minister took notice of a question no supplementaries were allowed. I refer all members to the *Journals* of the

Legislative Assembly, session 1975 - 76, page 42, as follows:

The purpose of a supplementary question is to seek specific clarification of the answer to the main question. It is therefore reasonable that if a minister replies that he will take the question as notice or asks the member to submit a written question, a supplementary question would then be out of order. A supplementary question can only be asked if an answer is given.

Over the last decade the practice has been relaxed to permit a supplementary to a question that has been taken as notice. At the same time some leeway has been given to the minister to make a very brief but general response while undertaking to bring in a more specific and detailed answer at a later time.

This practice, however, must not degenerate into giving a minister an opportunity to answer the same question twice and take up valuable time in question period. Therefore, I caution ministers to be very brief when taking a question to notice. By the same token, the supplementaries in such a situation should be without a preamble and narrowly worded for the purpose of eliciting further information.

However, having said that, I remain unconvinced that supplementaries to questions to which the minister has taken notice should be allowed under any circumstances. Even though this practice has developed in our legislature over time, it is a practice which I will have to further consider.

Finally, I want to address the question raised regarding the role of the Chair. I thank the hon. member for Regina Centre for raising this matter as it is central to some of the difficulties we have been experiencing in question period. It is indeed the role of the Chair to determine what is, or is not, in order at any time during the proceedings of the House. It is not the role of members from either side of the House to loudly and repeatedly call for order from their desks. This constitutes an interference with the proceedings that is itself out of order. The proper way for members to raise what they see as a breach of the guide-lines in question period is to raise a point of order before orders of the day.

I refer all members to a ruling of the Chair, *Journals* of the Legislative Assembly, session 1984-85-86, page 183, where the Speaker stated as follows:

It is my duty, my practice and my intent, to apply the guidelines for Question Period as fairly and consistently as possible without being so stringent as to unduly interfere with the cut and thrust of the process.

This also is my intention. However, it should be pointed out to all members that the success of question period is dependent primarily not so much on the rules themselves, or on the power of the Chair, but on the attitude hon. members bring to the House.

It has been evident to me since 1982, when I first sat in

this Assembly, and since the beginning of the first session of the 21st Legislature that when members and ministers abide by the accepted principles for question period, those question periods have been fruitful, productive, and beneficial to all concerned. Conversely, when members and ministers do not consciously seek to abide by the accepted principles, then even though the Chair can call hon. members to order, the harm done to question period is irreversible.

So while it is clear that the Chair must determine what is, or is not, in order, members, I am certain, realize that the less the Chair is called on to interfere with the proceedings of the House, the more productive the proceedings will be.

Finally, I ask all members to co-operate with the Chair by making a conscious attempt to adhere to the principles of acceptable behaviour in the House rather than shouting and hollering from your desks.

One last point — my door is open at all times, and I invite member to discuss these and any other matters with me as they arise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Berntson that Bill No. 5 — **An Act respecting the Organization of the Executive Government of Saskatchewan** be now read a second time.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to further add to the debate on Bill 5, and during my portion of this debate I'd like touch on three things. Firstly, the reasons why we are entering this debate and why the New Democratic Party is in opposition to the passing of Bill 5. Secondly, I'd like to mention a flaw in Bill 5 itself. And thirdly, I want to talk briefly about what open government is and what open government means to all of us here in this Assembly.

The reasons for this debate, Mr. Speaker, have everything to do with a power-grab that is going on — a power-grab for the cabinet opposite so that they may negate the goings-on of the Legislative Assembly, that cabinet may, in their own internal little wisdom, decide to dismantle or to start a new area of the government without having to come back in front of the Legislative Assembly.

There's a great deal of frustration, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House with Bill 5. You may have guessed that because of the huge number of people that have spoken in front of me. And I can assure you there are more speakers lined up ready, willing, and able to speak behind me on this Bill. And the reason, as I've stated, is a frustration with the power-grab and what is going on.

First we had in this legislation, we had a situation where the government tried to sneak a quorum, a change in quorum by us, through something that was ruled in your ruling to be not the correct way to make that change come about. And what I'm submitting is that Bill 5 is yet another extension of this power-grab — of an attempt by the government, by the Conservative government, to do what they can to circumvent Her Majesty's loyal opposition, that is, the members of the New Democratic Party. Needless to say we are objecting, and will continue to object most strenuously to what is going on.

There's a second item in this. It was a question of the notice to the opposition. And it is yet another example of why we are in the process of fighting what is going on. It's the all-pervading feelings of, if you like, ill will, Mr. Speaker, that is generated. I must admit to being personally somewhat disillusioned with some of the things that are going on in the Legislative Assembly.

Imagine what the people out in our constituencies across Saskatchewan must be feeling right now. Here we are; we have duly elected government and duly elected opposition trying to do what is best for the people of the province of Saskatchewan. At least we are, on this side. We are doing our job and we're finding it very, very frustrating not being able to get at information, not having an open government on the other side.

The road-blocks that are put in front of us just are totally unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. We must do what we can to stop Bill 5. And indeed I ask all hon. members of this Legislative Assembly to vote against Bill 5. The only people that will be served by Bill 5 are cabinet in their power-grab; cabinet that wants to consolidate all the power so that only a handful of people in Saskatchewan will make all of the decisions. And not only will the opposition be left out in the cold, but so will the back benches of the government. And that has to be a frustrating place to be. At least here we can vocalize our opposition. The poor back-benchers to the government cannot do that.

I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 5 is a power-grab, and I will be elaborating a little bit further on that in my presentation.

But I'd like to ask a fundamental question of the members opposite and of the Legislative Assembly. And that is: how has business been done in the past? How is it that all of a sudden we have to have this massive change, this grabbing of power for cabinet now in the name of efficiency? We are for efficiency, Mr. Speaker, but we are not for a power-grab. So, how is it? How was business done in the past?

The other day I went home — actually it was Friday evening and I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you will appreciate my feelings were not all that great. I went home and my wife asked me, why are you so grumpy? And I said, well, you know I have been ill. And I had been physically ill now for five days, leading up to that time. But I said fundamentally the big concern, the reason that I am so grumpy now is I don't feel good about what is going on in the Legislative Assembly, in that institution which I hold

very dear. And I don't feel good; that's what I had to tell my wife and my children. And it's not a pleasant feeling to have our obligations and our duties being circumvented in the manner that Bill 5 purports to do so. So it's not a happy situation when it leaves members of the opposition not feeling good about what is going on and the business of the legislature.

An Hon. Member: — It would certainly make me nauseous too.

Mr. Trew: — The member for Regina Lakeview, Mr. Speaker, pointed out in her address that there are things in Bill 5. . . Bill 5 does some things, that the British statutes state, is not in there. I will save some time in the legislature by asking member to refer to *Hansard* to the things that the member for Regina Lakeview stated, and I believe that the points were stated more clearly there than I could if I were to take an additional 15 minutes of the members' time.

But the one point that I do want to expand a little bit on that the member for Regina Lakeview pointed out, is that there is absolutely no guarantee that regulations will be published. What I submit that this allows — and I invite members of the government to tell if I'm wrong— but what I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this will allow, when regulations do not have to be published, it will allow cabinet to pass an order in council; (a), it will allow them to pass a law, in their power-grab, and this law could be enforced and the public may not even know about the law.

What I'm saying . . . I'll bring it a little bit into perspective. It's kind of like if you watch an American television program, you watch the policeman stopping the speeders and you see the little tiny print, speed limit 25 miles an hour, in what should obviously be a much faster area. And the policeman smiles and pulls the motorist over and demands immediate payment, and the motorist says: well, gee, I didn't see that speed limit sign, and the cop smiles and says: ah, but it was there — ignorance is no excuse. And that's what might happen here under this Bill where we can have laws being passed and no guarantee that regulations will be published, no guarantee whatsoever that regulations will be published. This, Mr. Speaker, allows, as I stated, cabinet to pass laws, and the public may not even know about them and yet the public wind up in trouble with the legal system. I find that unacceptable.

How are we supposed to take a government seriously when the members say: trust us. They say: trust us on this. Bill 5 isn't a power-grab. Just trust us . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member for Rosemont says they're not saying anything and for the record that is true, but there has been some heckling during the debate from hon. members opposite saying, trust us, Bill 5 is not a power-grab. I have heard it. I'm sure the member for Rosemont has heard it, as have many of us on this side. Trust us, they say . . . And they say one thing and they do exactly the opposite.

How can we trust a government that originally said: ah, there's so much more we can be. Of course, they weren't talking . . . I don't think at that time they were talking

about balanced budgets, because you can" balance a budget more times than 11 out of 11 straight balanced budgets, which the New Democratic Party through the 1970s and up to 1982 did. Eleven out of 11, Mr. Speaker. And the members opposite said, oh, but there's so much more we can do and we can balance the books; we can have so much more for Saskatchewan people.

(1445)

Well they've failed on that, in that one — I'm reluctant to use the word — sacred trust, but certainly when we are asked to look after the taxpayers pocket, their purse, Mr. Speaker, we should be doing what we say we are going to do. And if we say we're going to have a balanced budget, we should be able to deliver on a balanced budget. Members opposite have never delivered on a balanced budget yet, and I don't think it's going to happen. So how can we trust the members opposite when they have proven not to be trustworthy on many, many important issues.

How can we, Mr. Speaker, trust a government that says, we believe in a down-sized government. We believe in fewer public employees and yet there are more public employees working in Saskatchewan today than there were five years ago.

They say down-sized government, and then they wind up increasing the size of government . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member for Rosemont correctly points out, minister's offices have been expanded hugely, much faster than anywhere else. The political wing of the government, if you like, the political wing of the civil service has expanded at just an astronomical rate and yet the government members say, trust us. Trust us. There's no reason why, on this side of the House, why we have any inclination whatsoever to trust them.

We have mentioned political patronage in the legislature. In the past two weeks have talked about it fairly extensively. It's yet another example of the trust-us mentality. Why should we trust the members when there's patronage like we have never seen certainly in your lifetime or in my lifetime, Mr. Speaker. There's more political patronage in this province now than ever — ever!

Mr. Speaker, we have Weyerhaeuser now, and the government says, trust us. We have a deal where we have shown that not only was there no down payment in Weyerhaeuser, which is normal in the sale of any other. . . Well any normal sale, any commercial transaction, there is usually a down payment. If I sell you something, Mr. Speaker, I expect something in return from you. Usually it's in the form of cash. And yet in this instance, it's like I own PAPCO and sell it to you, and then I've give you \$7.5 million to take my existing asset. It just doesn't make any sense whatsoever. Why would I sell an automobile for the member for Regina North West, sell him an automobile for \$5,000, and then I give him an additional \$1,000 in cash in the glove box with the automobile, and he doesn't give me any cash back.

An Hon. Member: — I'll take two.

Mr. Trew: — The hon. member says, I'll take two. The thing is we don't have two PAPCOs here in the province, we only have one. That's why there's only one \$7.5 million payment, I guess. The credit union will be very pleased to know that I am unable to fulfil the terms of the deal that I just offered the member for North West. I'm off the hook.

But the point I'm making, Mr. Speaker, is we have a government that says, trust us, and then they give us no reason to trust them — none whatsoever. They say, trust us, just like the more than 140 Saskatchewan highway workers that diamond Jim Garner transferred to the private sector. And he said, trust us, trust us; 140 — at least 140 highways workers transferred to the private sector. Many of those workers are now collecting welfare. Why? Because there aren't jobs. The job creation record of the government, of the Conservative government in Saskatchewan, is so dismal that many people transferred to the private sector simply cannot find work. That is abhorrent. That is part of why we are fighting the power-grab by the cabinet right now, the power-grab that is represented in Bill 5, Mr. Speaker.

Yet another example of a trust-us mentality. The government having sold a coal mine to Manalta Coal, the coal mine that cost \$102 million to develop, and it was sold for \$17 million in negotiables.

Simple mathematics, Mr. Speaker, tells you that there's \$85 million left that is owing to the people of Saskatchewan. The \$85 million is in long-term, low-interest loans — long term, low interest. Plus, we guaranteed that Saskatchewan Power Corporation would purchase every lump of coal from that coal mine in perpetuity as long as there's any coal there — every lump of coal.

Why would we do that? Why would we do that? The government says, trust us. Trust us. While we line the pockets of our big corporate friends, they say: trust us; trust us. But it's not simply the government's, or the members opposite's pockets that this money is coming from; it's coming from the taxpayers in Regina North and in Regina Rosemont and in Saskatoon and Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, even in Estevan.

It's coming from the taxpayers in Regina Centre, Moose Jaw North. I've mentioned Estevan already. It's coming from Souris-Cannington, Meadow Lake, Kindersley . . . name it — it's there. Moosomin. All these taxpayers. Every bad deal that the government makes is taking money out of the taxpayers' pockets in those constituencies — every constituency in the province. And yet the members say, trust us.

I'd just like to know where the line-up is. If Saskatchewan is able to sell a coal mine that cost \$102 million to develop, and they sell it with the deal that I outlined, I'd like to know where the line-up is for coal mines; I want to buy one. Then maybe I could fulfil the terms of the \$5,000 automobile in the example that I used for the member from Regina North just a few moments ago.

And we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also an example of \$100 million worth of potash mining

equipment that is sold — Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan mining equipment that is sold to an eastern Canadian financial institution and then leased back for 15 years. It doesn't make much sense, does it? It's, instead of me selling the automobile to the member from Regina North West for \$5,000, I sell it to him, and then I lease it back for 15 years.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will purchase anything within reason from anybody if they'll give me a guaranteed lease-back, particularly if that lease-back is 15 years. And you know that I will come out financially on top. And that is what is happening in this instance. And it's the taxpayers' money that is being squandered. It is the taxpayers' money that is going simply to keep the profits and the big corporations going.

That, we object to, Mr. Speaker, and that is the sort of reason why we are fighting Bill 5. We do not want cabinet to be able to make deals like this and not bring it back in front of the Legislative Assembly where we can quite properly point out the terms of the deal, and point out to the voters of Saskatchewan, and point out to the back-benchers of the government just how bad that deal really and truly is. We have to have the ability, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to bring items in front of the Legislative Assembly. We must maintain that right, and that right is circumvented by Bill 5. That right, that power-grab of the cabinet is something that we truly must fight. And the members opposite continue to say, trust us.

We've seen Dominion Bridge, which is a long-time company right here in Regina . . . it has been here for many, many years — closed right up. Sold off, as I understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Dominion Bridge sold off the last of its assets just within the last 30 days. It's a sad, sad commentary on the Conservative government that we can have a long-time firm close like that. And it meant a considerable loss of jobs. Memory serves me it was something like 80 jobs lost. And yet the members say, trust us.

I recall being in the visitors' gallery during the last session when the Leader of the Opposition stood up and asked the Minister of Highways to name a bridge project and to give it to Dominion Bridge in a last-ditch effort to keep those 80 jobs here in Saskatchewan. And I recall watching from the visitors' gallery while the Leader of the Opposition was essentially told, no, why would you want to do something silly like that? After all, there is another firm that's going to make considerable money. And the issue died right there, along with the jobs that disappeared, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And yet the members opposite say, trust us. Trust us.

We've also got an example of Dad's Cookies just east of town here, White City. Dad's Cookies made cookies for many, many years — closed under this administration — closed.

We have Supercart International, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we're not just sure how long they're going to be open for business. We wish them continued good luck because any jobs are welcome. We want to see Supercart International succeed but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we really have our doubts.

And IPSCO is certainly not working well for the hundreds and hundreds of workers who are on lay-off. The hundreds and hundreds of IPSCO workers and their families who are on lay-off in a Christmas season — it is devastating. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite say, trust us, while we see IPSCO families going with fewer presents under their Christmas tree this year than ever before. The reason there's fewer presents under the trees, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is simply that when you don't know when you're going to work, you don't expend that money. You save it because you might need it for your next loaf of bread. And that's the situation that laid-off IPSCO workers are finding themselves in.

An Hon. Member: — And they say, trust us.

Mr. Trew: — And they say, trust us, as the member for Regina Rosemont says. And they say, trust us. And we say, why? Why would we trust you in light of what has been happening, and now you want a further power-grab from Bill 5?

An Hon. Member: — That looks good on TV.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. The member opposite says that looks good on TV. It's an old trick I learned from my grandfather. When you aren't quite sure of what you're going to say next, you pull out the hanky and blow your nose.

The members opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, keep saying: trust us, trust us, trust us. It's like an old tired and broken record — trust us. Cabinet, under Bill 5, can disestablish departments and has absolutely no obligation in Bill 5, Mr. Deputy Speaker, no obligation to reassign the duties anywhere else — nowhere. And they say, trust us.

(1500)

Departments can, as I say, disappear. The department that I'm a critic of, the Department of Co-operation and Co-op Development, can literally disappear. And I mentioned in my throne speech debate, the number of employees in the Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development have decreased from 102 down — the exact number escapes me at the moment, but it is certainly something under 80. And that's a sad legacy for the present government to have. They will, I submit, under Bill 5, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will simply go the extra step and amalgamate the Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development with Consumer and Commercial Affairs or some other department, and we will see the Department of Co-operation and Co-op Development disappear completely. And yet the members opposite say, trust us, trust us.

It is certainly a departure from past practice, and it is all disguised in the name of efficiency. How can we have efficiency on one hand, and the legacy of the Devine Conservative government is that of nearly a \$3 billion deficit? Three billion dollar deficit and they say, trust us, trust us, trust us.

This Bill 5 does not represent a single efficiency. If it does,

show us, tell us, explain it. That's all we ask. Show us, tell us, explain it.

An Hon. Member: — They haven't said a word. Not a word.

Mr. Trew: — Nothing, not a word is right. There is nowhere that efficiency is addressed in Bill 5 and nor will it be. It is nothing other than a power-grab. And as I've mentioned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 5 will erode the power of the Legislative Assembly. And that we must oppose, and we must oppose it strenuously and vigorously.

I mentioned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I was going to talk about an open government and what that means to you and I and to this Assembly. To have an open government, to have an open anything . . . I'll use an example, an illustration if you like. If I were to tell the hon. member sitting next to me to go to Estevan, he's apt to tell me where to go, and it wouldn't be Estevan. If I were to say, no, but go to Estevan, and if you go to the credit union there, I have a counter cheque drawn up in your name for \$5,000. I'd like you to have that and have a merry Christmas. Then I've presented a reason for the hon. member to go to Estevan, and I believe he would quite happily go there.

But it's to do with openness. It's to do with explaining why you're going there. I might well not be using the crass commercial \$5,000. I might rather say to the member, I would take it as very much a personal favour if you would go to Estevan and look up my relatives and explain to them why I cannot be there with them Christmas Day, and I would very much be grateful if you would do that. And then the member again might go. But it's because I've given him a reason. It's something to do with being open.

What we need is for the government to be open — the government that has said it wants to run an open government. We're simply saying, we'll give you every opportunity to run an open government, but let's do it. Let's actually have an open and fair and honest government.

I talked about the quorum for committees, and the government tried to change the quorum of the committees. That simply did not happen because of a ruling that came from the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And now we have cabinet control of reorganization of departments, and that done through Bill 5. Cabinet control of reorganization of departments and also of elimination, or as the legislation says, disestablishment of departments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that cannot happen. We do not see any way that that is going to enhance democracy. That's not going to enhance any of the members who sit in this Legislative Assembly, and it's certainly not going to be a part of what the voters of Saskatchewan elected all of us collectively to be here and to represent.

And the next item after Bill 5, some time perhaps this fall, some time perhaps in the spring, we understand there's going to be a new boundary Act, a new electoral

boundary Act. That was included in the throne speech, and it is yet another example of the power-grab that is going to be taking place. And because of the electoral boundary Act and Bill 5, we see the two of them tying in together as part of a greater picture, if you like, a “trust us” picture that the members of the government, and particularly the members of the cabinet, keep wanting us to trust them. We are opposed to both, of course.

The duty, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and members opposite, the duty of the opposition is to oppose. The duty of the opposition is to safeguard democracy, and I'll submit that our democracy never needed guarding more than it has needed guarding in this fall session — never needed worse.

The duty of the opposition is to do that in the interest of all the people of Saskatchewan. And I say all the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we need an active opposition just as we need a good, active government. There is no question about that. But regardless of how people voted — whether they voted for members of the opposition or for members of the government — both have a role and a duty to fulfil, and both of us are simply saying — or I shouldn't say both of us — we are simply saying, let us do it. Do not impose Bill 5 upon us. Let us do our jobs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member for Saskatoon Fairview mentioned in his presentation that in his view, Bill 5 is *ultra vires* or beyond the scope of this legislature to pass. In other words, even if we do, if the government imposes Bill 5 on us, rams it down our throat, then it still has some question as to whether it's legally binding. It's interesting to see the debate that carried on a Bill that we're not even sure whether we can legally pass or not.

The member for Saskatoon Fairview talks of Bill 5 being *ultra vires*, while the member for Regina Lakeview says that cabinet, under Bill 5 — and this is the real crux of the power-grab, Mr. Deputy Speaker — cabinet, under Bill 5, may redefine objects and purposes — objects and purposes. And that has been pointed out; it is much, much broader than duties and functions. So when cabinet can redefine objects and purposes, it's so much greater in importance that if cabinet can simply redefine duties and functions. And that's part of our opposition to this power-grab that Bill 5 is.

What we're asking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and members opposite, is: why use an elephant gun to kill a fly? And of course there can be no answer, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There can be no answer as to why use an elephant gun to kill a fly.

An Hon. Member: — Power . . .

Mr. Trew: — Power-grab, of course. But there can be no other answer.

I'd like to point out an excerpt that I got, a letter that was cc'd — carbon copied — to the opposition caucus. The letter is from SGEU, December 18th, and addressed to the Hon. Grant Devine, Premier of Saskatchewan, Legislative Buildings, Regina, and so on.

And I'm just going to read one paragraph of this letter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I think it summarizes the crux of what this SGEU, this important union of working men and women, of Government of Saskatchewan employees, what they have to say on this particular Bill, on Bill 5. And the SGEU says, and I quote:

The proposed government organization Act would, if passed, have the effect of overriding many pieces of existing legislation which guarantees the maintenance of government services to the public. It would allow the cabinet to eliminate or reorganize government departments and agencies without the knowledge or permission of the province's elected representatives in the legislature.

This paragraph, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sums up what I have been saying, very succinctly, very much to the point. And what it is saying is that it's a power-grab by the cabinet. Simple as that. Nothing but a power-grab. And it will allow cabinet to eliminate or reorganize government departments and agencies without having to come back to the Legislative Assembly. And there can be no justification for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, none whatsoever. Never can you have a power-grab and justify it.

Now what I've done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is I've given the reasons why we are in this debate and why the New Democratic Party is opposing Bill 5. I have given not one, but two flaws in Bill 5, and I have spoken briefly about what an open government is and what it should mean to all of us here in Saskatchewan.

I have spoken in some length about the frustration that I as a member have felt — the frustration, the lack of good will, the lack of good feelings about what is going on in this Legislative Assembly. And I can't help but stress, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the good will can still be had. It still can be, but do away with Bill 5.

Why try and ram down a Bill that is obviously violently opposed by the opposition? Why, why have such a blatant power-grab? Why do it? Why set yourself up for all the ill will, all of the bad feelings, all of the wrath that the opposition can show a government over the next number of years until the next general election? Why do it? Why do it? Why the power-grab? Why pass this Bill at all? Let it die. Let it die.

Bill 5 is a second step, if you like. The first was the change in the quorum question that was tried to be passed on the first day of the session. That quorum question was settled, and settled to our satisfaction. We said at the time to the members opposite — we said, don't be silly. This changing of the quorum won't enhance the legislative proceedings whatsoever.

And Bill 5 will have the same effect, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Bill 5 will no more enhance the proceedings here than did the quorum question of the first day. In fact, Bill 5 is much more dangerous because it concentrates power in a very, very select handful of people.

I've mentioned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question of

notice of legislation to the opposition. And I have I believe registered my personal dissatisfaction with the lack of notice that the opposition has been given. It is somewhat disturbing to, on one hand, be expected to be presenting a coherent opposition, and then on the next hand we're not just too sure what legislature is being proposed on any given day.

We do not want to obstructionist; we want an open government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And an open government is precluded by Bill 5. That power-grab stops it.

(1515)

I have asked, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how it was that business was done before Bill 5. And it's a serious question and one that members opposite would be well advised to contemplate. How was it that business in the legislature was done before Bill 5 and before the power-grab?

The member for Souris-Cannington has pointed out to us that bill 5 does nothing that the British law doesn't already do and hasn't done for some years. And we have pointed out repeatedly to the member for Souris-Cannington where that statement that he made in this Assembly was in error. We have pointed that out.

How can we trust a government which says something that we can point out in black and white on paper that that's not the way it is? And yet we're being asked, trust us. Trust us on bill 5, Trust us. We cannot do it. We simply cannot do it.

If statement were made and could be held as being rightfully made, maybe we could trust the members opposite. But in this instance we can't, because we have proven that the member for Souris-Cannington was in error in his statement. If he was in error when he was introducing Bill 5, what other serious flaws are there in the printed Bill? How many flaws are there; how much of a power-grab is there? We've got some real serious questions on this side of the House, and we really just have to question how bad is Bill 5. How bad is it?

I've pointed out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that regulations do not have to be published under Bill 5. This allows the cabinet to pass laws and us . . . we may not even know about the laws. We may in fact be in serious trouble with the judicial system, and yet we don't know why. When laws are passed under current law in Saskatchewan, the way things are set up now, the regulations have to be published before laws can be proclaimed. Under Bill 5, that's not necessarily the case.

I've pointed out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have a government that has said, trust us. And I've listed a litany of problems, of areas where there's been no reason for us to trust them. One is Weyerhaeuser and the \$7.5 million that we have had to pay to Weyerhaeuser of the United States to take over our assets. And I've pointed out in my opening arguments just how ludicrous that deal was, and I've tried to tie it in, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with Bill 5. We have, on one hand, a group of people saying, trust us on Weyerhaeuser; trust us; we've made a good deal. And

they're saying, trust us on Bill 5; trust us; it's a good Bill. And we're submitting, it is not a good Bill.

An Hon. Member: — It's a bad Bill.

Mr. Trew: — As the member for Regina Rosemont says, it is a bad Bill, and I concur with his view.

I pointed out the Manalta Coal deal and how much that's going to be costing the taxpayers, and not just the taxpayers in my constituency of Regina North, but the taxpayers throughout this great province of ours. And I object. I don't think that people should be paying for the errors and for the patronage and the plums that are being handed out by the present government.

I pointed out that there's some substantial mining equipment from Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan that was sold to an eastern Canadian financial institution, purportedly for \$100 million, and then leased back for 15 years. I pointed out how silly that was, and what a bad deal it was for the taxpayers of the province. And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I tie it in. They say, trust us on this and trust us on Bill 5, and we can do neither. Both are bad.

I talked about Dominion Bridge and Dad's Cookies, both of which had been long-time firms in and around the Regina area; both of which are now not working. I also talked, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about IPSCO and how the many, many hundreds and hundreds of workers are laid off and are having a dismal Christmas. Laid off, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of policies that the government agrees with; that the government initiated in many instances. And we've got so many people laid off that we have no reason whatsoever to trust the members opposite.

Just before closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to again reiterate that under Bill 5 cabinet can disestablish — that means eliminate, terminate, wipe out, end, finish, whatever — disestablish departments, and it has no obligation to reassign the duties of those departments or people working in those departments to anywhere else. So in one fell swoop cabinet can end a department completely.

I have used the example of the department for which I am critic, the Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development. And I would find it abhorrent, I would find it a sad, sad day for Saskatchewan if a major economic sector of our economy, that is the co-operative sector, were to find itself disassociated from the Government of Saskatchewan after many, many years of association.

And a handful of people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a handful of people in cabinet could end that department just like that. After years and years and years of that department being around, a handful of people could eliminate that department at the snap of a finger and we would have no recourse whatsoever. We in opposition would have no recourse in the Legislative Assembly at all. That would be a sad, sad state of affairs.

I did point out that the duty of the opposition is to oppose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it is a duty that I'm sure you can appreciate we take most seriously. We do not propose to

be the Grinches who stole Christmas. Indeed, we will argue that it is the members opposite who are indeed being the Grinches who are stealing Christmas.

This legislation is so bad that we will stay here, and stay here until it is withdrawn or defeated — one of the two. And that's a grim sort of a statement to make, but I don't know how else we in the opposition can make the point that Bill 5 is a bad one. It is inherently bad; it is patently bad. We have a government that says trust us, trust us, trust us. And they give us absolutely no reason to trust them, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm not sure I'd go quite so far as the member from Rosemont just said. His statement will stay off the record, if it's all right.

The member for Saskatoon Fairview pointed out this legislation is *ultra vires* and the member for Regina Lakeview secondly pointed out that under Bill 5 cabinet can redefine objects and purposes rather than simply duties and functions.

So there's a couple of things wrong with the legislation. One, we're not sure if we can legally pass it or not. And the second one is what the powers this legislation purports to give to cabinet are. And again I ask the question: why would you use an elephant gun to kill a fly?

I have pointed out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the opposition of the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union) to this legislation. And they very properly point out that it is nothing but a power-grab for cabinet — nothing other than an unmitigated power-grab. And we cannot support it in any way, shape, or form.

I urge members opposite, particularly back-benchers, when the time comes to vote on Bill 5, for Heaven's sake vote against it. Do not support it. It is a bad Bill. It is a power-grab that will eliminate . . . what little members of the government back bench can do now, they will be able to do even less. It is a power-grab for the cabinet. We will have a government run by a very select little handful of people rather than a broader parliamentary democratic system where everything is open and we can see it in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in concluding my debate on Bill 5, again I urge every member in the Legislative Assembly to see that Bill 5 does not get passed. It is a bad Bill and one which we on this side of the House are prepared obviously to fight. We will fight.

Let's see that we pass good legislation. Let's see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we can have a spirit of co-operation. Let's see that. But in order for that spirit of co-operation and that goodwill to happen, we have to see things like Bill 5 disappearing. Bill 5 cannot be allowed to pass.

I end my part of the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with a final plea. Do not pass Bill 5.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to enter this debate this afternoon and to

comment on Bill 5, the Act respecting the organization of the executive government of Saskatchewan. I'm particularly pleased to do this on behalf of the people of Saskatoon Sutherland and for them, to explain to them what this Bill means, what it purports to do, and how it will affect them.

I should begin by saying I'm especially appreciative of the efforts of the member for The Battlefords on Friday, who outlined some of the specific effects of this Bill when it comes to privatization of government services. And I won't address that subject because he did such a very good job relative to privatization. I however, Mr. Speaker, would like to address the larger issue of the constriction of power that is found in this Bill.

This Bill purports to be innocuous and simply an efficiency measure, a reorganization of government, minor housekeeping details, if we're to believe the Deputy Premier.

Allegedly this Bill would actually assist the operation of this Assembly. How, we might ask, would it assist this Assembly? Well allegedly by relieving this Chamber of the necessity of examining legislation, of dealing with government structures and activities, and in eliminating that responsibility from this Assembly, transferring it to the Office of the Premier, to assist the Premier, allegedly, in the delivery of government programs and policy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what this means, in short, is that this Bill would fundamentally change the operation of the Government of Saskatchewan. It would change the operation of the Saskatchewan government by doing two things simultaneously. First, it would diminish the role of this legislature and the role of decision-making on behalf of the public. And it would accomplish this, secondly, by enhancing the role of the Premier, and the decision-making process that is done in private. And this is my objection to Bill 5.

(1530)

This Bill, in a word, bypasses the Legislative Assembly. It bypasses the Assembly by giving enormous powers to the Premier; elevating the office of the Premier and his advisers by giving them sweeping powers which really go to a closed cabinet that makes decisions in private, in Executive Council. And at the same time as it does this, it robs the public of most of its access to the decision-making process by removing such decisions from the floor of this Chamber. And this then is what I find so offensive about this Bill. It robs the public of the power they have entrusted in us as elected members of this Assembly, while at the very same time aggrandizing the Office of the Premier.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this in effect is a move toward a centralization of power in one person, in one office — that of the Premier. It is a move, really, toward a presidential style of politics, a system whereby decisions are made by executive decree and not by the democratic process of debate.

This is a fundamental distinction and an aberration of our tradition here in this Assembly. We have here in this

Assembly a tradition and a system of power where it is deployed in the hands of elected representatives and not concentrated in the hands of a very few, or even one.

So in a word, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill represents what we might say is a closeting of power within the Premier's office — a closeting of power within Executive Council. In effect what this Bill does is to create in Executive Council a sort of executive closet, a substitute for this Chamber and its decision-making powers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think that most of us here in this room, and most Saskatchewan people, know what closets are like. I think most Saskatchewan people will be able to envision what an executive closet is like. Like so many of our own personal closets in our homes, an executive closet is likely to be filled with more than it was supposed to hold. And like most of our closets at home, an executive closet is invariably, inevitably going to be filled with things that really don't belong there.

What sorts of things? Well this Bill 5 on the reorganization of the Government of Saskatchewan would fill the closet of Executive Council, according to section 5, with the power: to assign to any minister any power, duty, or function; to transfer any power, duty, or function to any other minister; to transfer any power, duty, or function imposed by law to any minister, any other minister, any department, or minister's department — for any period, for any purpose, for any area of the province.

In a word, this Bill goes beyond anything we've known before. In a word, anything goes with this Bill, and it goes into the executive closet. Now why — why would this Bill purport to give Executive Council such powers and prerogatives? Why would this government want to pack the Premier's office and his Executive Council with the power to do almost anything but sell peanuts in Rosetown?

Allegedly, for the sake of simplicity, in the name of efficiency, if we're to believe the Deputy Premier who, incidentally, will be holding the keys to the closet of Executive Council. But perhaps there is some truth to this — that there is some efficiency in such a process. There is a simplicity to it.

And again I refer to the closets that most of us are familiar with. We know only too well that when the house is in a mess and company is coming for a public inspection, there's no simpler, more efficient way to clean up a mess than to throw things into a bedroom closet and to hide them to get them out of sight. And, Mr. Speaker, this is the truth of what this government would do with its mess of the public business and of the public purse with this Bill 5. It proposes in this Bill to get its mess out of sight so that it can be managed in secret — to get it out of sight as fast as it can.

Mr. Speaker, this government proposes in this Bill to hide its dirty laundry in the executive closet; its mismanagement of public funds; its unfair taxation policy; its unfair labour practices; its deregulation; its privatization; its patronage appointments; its shuffling of departments back and forth so budgetary spending matters can't be seen or considered; its advertising; its

inordinate advertising spending; its cuts in social services. All these things will be thrown into the executive closet in a big mumbo-jumbo sort of government scramble.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg did this Assembly a service last week when he pointed out the provision in section 19 for the executive closet to have great and sweeping financial authorities, that:

A minister may, for any purpose relating to any matter under his administration or for which he is responsible, provide financial assistance by way of a grant, loan, guarantee or other similar means, in accordance with any terms or conditions that are prescribed in the (the legislation) . . . to any person, agency, organization, association, institution or body with (Saskatchewan) or outside Saskatchewan.

Just imagine the sort of dirty laundry, fiscally, that can be thrown into this closet. Yes, all this sort of dirty laundry can be thrown out of this public Chamber and into the Executive Council where it can't be seen, where it can't be touched, where it can't be dealt with. But that doesn't mean that it won't smell and that eventually people won't find out some of what goes on in that closet and some of what has been shunted into it to hide the mess of public affairs.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that this Bill eliminates public accessibility and public accountability. This Bill actually encourages surreptitious decision-making. It grants extraordinary privileges and powers to the Premier and to his Executive Council — privileges and powers that belong properly to the floor of this Assembly which belongs to the people of the province.

Here in this Chamber there is public accountability. There is full accountability. Here we have debate. Here we have an opposition. Here we have the cut and thrust, the parliamentary procedure. We have question and answer. There's accountability. And the people of the province are entitled to this process and procedure. This is precisely what they've elected us to do . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — . . . to transact their business here in this Chamber, and not to see it in an Executive Council aggrandized beyond all measure. But that's not what they'll get with this Bill 5, tabled in this legislature by this government. That's not what they'll get. Instead they'll get a chamber closed to the normal discourse of decision-making and virtually no public review. And the only public review that will happen will happen after the fact, well after the fact, when hopefully the government would hope that it has been forgotten by the public.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Chamber is where the people of Saskatchewan have a window on government. Through their members, they can scrutinize the operation of government. Through the media of TV and the broadcasting of these proceedings, they have a window on the government activities. Through the print media,

the written press, they have a window by way of reporting. But there are very few closets that have windows. And once issues and decisions and departments and regulations and policies are removed from this room to the Executive Council and its executive closet, the people of the province will lose their window on the operation of government. The media will lose its window on the operation of government. This opposition will lose its window on the operation of the government and won't be able to see until well after the fact, if then, what this government is doing with the public trust. Indeed, even government back-benchers will not know until well after the fact what their government is doing by way of policy and planning and plotting.

Well the way things are now, the way we operate now in this Assembly, the public can see. They can see not only what decisions are being made, but they can see how they are being made, who is making them, why they're being made. This certainly won't happen once the decision-making process retreats into Executive Council and is removed from the public arena of this Assembly.

The situation the, that we have before us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not simply a reorganization of government — far from it. The situation we have before us is much more akin to the Government of Saskatchewan, or the Premier himself, demanding a blank cheque from this legislature and from the people of Saskatchewan — a blank cheque in terms of this Bill 5 to establish or disestablish whatever departments or particular parts of departments the Premier decides to disestablish or establish; a blank cheque to assign any power, function, or duty; to transfer any function, duty, or power; a blank cheque, in effect, to usurp power properly belonging to the members of this Legislative Assembly and to the people of the province; a blank cheque that they are not entitled to.

Any government has a public responsibility, has a public responsibility for accessibility, for accountability. And the people of Saskatoon Sutherland, I know, don't want this legislature's hands to be tied. They want this legislature, and not the Executive Council, to be establishing and disestablishing departments, so they know what their future is in the public arena. They don't want an Executive Council doing that.

And they want this Legislative Assembly assigning powers and duties and functions, and transferring them as well. The people of Saskatoon Sutherland, I believe, are entitled to the legislature doing this, as it has in the past, by means of the members they placed here.

No blank cheque has been given to the Premier. No government can demand such a blank cheque, unless of course they intend to govern by executive decree, and that is precisely my point — to govern by perhaps divine right, by sort of a move to a presidential style, almost dictatorial, characteristic of a totalitarian state.

Mr. Speaker, there's an old saying that says that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. And that, I believe, is what we see with this legislation — a government corrupted by power, and now wanting more power to hide corruption; a government which is arrogant enough to demand more powers, to disregard

the democratic process and to establish an autocratic process, a power unto itself, unanswerable by the public area.

(1545)

This government isn't new to the process of experimentation with power trips. During its first term of office, Saskatchewan people saw the largest, most expensive, bloated cabinet in Saskatchewan history. They saw cabinet ministers, some of who are no longer in this Assembly, jaunting across the globe and enjoying winter holidays in sunny places far away. And it was full steam ahead for the gravy train. They saw a cabinet that wined and dined at the public expense to the tune of more than a quarter of a million dollars a year. Power hungry, at a time when this same government was cutting food subsidy allowances for people in the North. And Saskatchewan people took note, enough to change, to some extent, the balance of power in this Legislative Assembly.

Now we have a second term for this government, a renewed mandate, a second term of office, and what do we see? I think we're seeing, with this legislation, another power trip, but a power trip in a different direction perhaps. It's in reverse, a power trip which will take them away from obvious excesses, from a large cabinet to a small inner circle. A power trip to restrict public accessibility and accountability. A power trip which will take them away from the public and back into the recesses of an executive closet.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatoon Sutherland don't want a government on a power trip. They don't want a presidential style of government here in Saskatchewan, nor another power trip by the Premier. The people of Sutherland do not want a new concentration of power in the Executive Council. They do not want a Legislative Assembly whose hands is tied, whose power is constrained. They don't want a decision-making process that is secretive, manipulative, or surreptitious.

Saskatchewan people want a decision-making process, I believe, that is in keeping with the open and public nature of this province. We all know what it's like to stand on the prairie and to see the wide-open skies and the panorama of land, and that is Saskatchewan. And that same openness ought to be characterized or reflected by government policy and practice. Saskatchewan people, I think, want a government that's as wide open as the Saskatchewan sky, as wide open as wheat field. They don't want their business constricted and conducted secretly.

The process of a free exchange of ideas and political policies is what brought me, and everyone else here, into this Legislative Assembly. And I remain committed to that process — an open exchange of ideas, an open political arena. And that is why I speak against this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the truth of Bill 5, I think, is that this government can't manage the public affairs, and the evidence of it is found in things like the \$3 billion deficit and the give-away to Weyerhaeuser. And because the government can't manage public affairs, it can't face the

public. It can't allow public scrutiny. It can't allow this Legislative Assembly to open its activities to the public or to the press.

And therefore, we have this Bill 5 tabled. This Bill is a Bill to establish an executive closet. We don't need or want an executive closet in Saskatchewan. This Bill needs to be completely withdrawn, or totally amended, to restore open, accessible, accountable government to the people who deserve that and are entitled to that — to the people of the province who voted for that in bringing each of us to this Assembly.

And so I speak against this Bill. I speak for an open exchange of ideas and political policies. And I thank you very much for your attention.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter into this important debate on Bill 5, a Bill which purports, Mr. Speaker, to be proposed before this Assembly to deal with government efficiency, if one is to believe the language of the Speech from the Throne. But I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill has more to do with government secrecy and a grab for power by the Government of Saskatchewan than it has to do with government efficiency.

Let me put this Bill, Mr. Speaker, into the context of a much larger picture, because I think in order to understand it, in order to have people truly understand the importance of this Bill, we have to look at it in the process of what's we've been dealing with since we've called this Legislative Assembly to order on December the 3rd, and began with the Speech from the Throne.

Now I had a number of people back in my riding, and I know a number of other members have as well, ask us why in the world would we be convening the Legislative Assembly three weeks before Christmas. And I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that when you are convening the Legislative Assembly three weeks before Christmas, it's for one of two reasons. Either because you have some routine business to take place, and we've seen a couple of Bills come before this legislature that would be of that nature, that provide protection for the agricultural people in Saskatchewan, and Bills which members on this side of the House support. But the other reason, the other reason that you'd convene the Legislative Assembly three weeks before Christmas would be because you intend to do some business that you would just as soon prefer that the public not pay a great deal of attention to, assuming and counting on the fact that people are getting ready for Christmas and they do not consider the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan their highest priority.

And I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that in my optimistic moments when I came to the first session, the first sitting of this session, that I believed initially that we were coming to deal with some routine business to extend the protection for the farmers of Saskatchewan. But I'm disappointed to say, Mr. Speaker, that as I've sat here with my colleagues on this side of the House and the members opposite, that it has become more and more obvious that we are here to deal with business that the government

would just as soon not have the people of Saskatchewan paying a great deal of attention to.

And what have we seen? What have we seen since we've come to these halls together? Let me refer to three things that establish the context within which we're considering this Bill.

On the first day, within six minutes of calling of the Legislative Assembly, we saw the attempt to take power away from the opposition and transfer it to government members by the introduction of an amendment to the quorums for committees.

And, Mr. Speaker, as that has been ruled on and found to be out of order, it is still significant to note, and let me reflect, that with that quorum change that was suggested, it was intended that it would enable the members of government, working in committees, whenever they see a subject coming before committee consideration to be not in the interests, in the political interests of the government of the day, to simply "serve the people" — and I use that phrase in quotation marks — "to serve the people" by walking away and not sitting and considering the important matters before the 10 or 12 legislative committees.

However, that's been defeated. That has been ruled out of order and that is no longer before us. But that is a part of establishing the environment, the atmosphere within which we consider Bill 5 today.

What else have we seen? In the Speech from the Throne we saw notice being given to introduce an Act to reconsider the electoral boundaries. And that's an Act, Mr. Speaker, which I'm sad to say is being cynically referred to in my riding, and I know the ridings of many others, an Act cynically being referred to as the gerrymander Act.

And I say that simply in the context of the fact that we have on the books in Saskatchewan today a Bill which empowers, in fact requires, that the electoral boundaries will be reviewed every eight years, and that time is up by the end of January — a very objective Act which provides for fair consideration of "one person, one vote" bringing effective and responsible representation to this Legislative Assembly.

Now I don't know what the specifics of the Bill will be when they are introduced in the spring session, I believe. But it does cause me to be suspicious, Mr. Speaker, and it causes a number of other people to be suspicious. And it would appear, when people are listening and taking note of what is being said in this Legislative Assembly . . .

And I'm pleased to say that that's happening much more than I had thought. I noticed when I went home this weekend that a number of constituents in my riding, as a matter of fact, have been watching the proceedings on television, have been reading their papers, and are asking what it is that we're considering.

And they're referring, they're even referring to the quorum requirement that was proposed for the committees, and they're asking about Bill 5. And they're

speculating already, they're speculating already upon the intentions of introducing the electoral boundaries review Act, because people are suspicious — suspicious that there is an objective, from the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, to transfer again to the government increased power and authority, and to take that away from a responsible opposition.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that brings us to this Bill before us referred to euphemistically as an organization Bill. And I tend to say, Mr. Speaker, that it is more accurate to refer to it as a reorganization Bill. It has been said by a number of people before me, and I don't feel the need to repeat that, Mr. Speaker, *ad infinitum*, but has been said by people before me, it is a Bill which seems very, very clearly to create a shift in power, a shift to increase the power of cabinet, the of the Premier and cabinet, and to again shift that power away from the opposition to do the role in a democratic society of being critical thinkers — constructively critical thinkers — so that the rights of people are assured when this Legislative Assembly does its business.

And what are people of Saskatchewan saying about the Bill? Well I think, Mr. Speaker, most clearly of all I'd like to refer to an editorial written in the Regina *Leader-Post* on December 18, which summarizes what people have been saying to me. And let me refer, Mr. Speaker, to that editorial which says:

The immediate intention of the bill (of Bill No. 5) is to combine (the Departments of) labour . . .

And I point out combining with the Department of Labour, which has a significant responsibility for the Workers' Compensation Board — the Department of Labour with the Workers' Compensation Board — the department of Social Services with all its tentacles (and we'll get to those later), the Employment Development Agency . . .

And let me just pause for a moment and reflect on the Employment Development Agency, Mr. Speaker, because the people in Saskatchewan remember very, very clearly the announcement of the Employment Development Agency several months ago — it would be in excess of a year ago now — which was announced with great bravado, which was announced with the mandate being given for the Employment Development Agency to address this province's number one problem, under — we were told — under the auspices of a single minister responsible for the Employment Development Agency. And here we have now being proposed in a reorganization that the Employment Development Agency will be lumped into what some are referring to as a department responsible for oppression. But included in here the Employment Development Agency, the Women's Secretariat and Native Secretariat, and also let me point out, Mr. Speaker, including under the Department of Social Services, the senior's bureau. At a time in which our senior's population in Saskatchewan is growing and many people believe that it is sufficient a concern that there should be as a matter of fact a department, a department alone which is responsible for delivering services to seniors, we find it's still a bureau

located within the Department of Social Services and lumped into this total amalgamation again.

So let me repeat, Mr. Speaker, and to quote the editorial in the Regina *Leader-Post* of December 18:

The immediate intention of the bill is to combine labour, social services, the Employment Development Agency and women's and native secretariats, into a new Human Resources Department. The bill's potential for abuse, however, is too obvious to let it go unchallenged.

Those are not my words, Mr. Speaker. Those are the words of the editor of the Regina *Leader-Post*, December 18th. And let me repeat them:

The bill's potential for abuse, however, is too obvious to let it go unchallenged.

And the editorial goes on, Mr. Speaker, to say:

NDP House Leader Roy Romanow was quite right in charging: "It represents a great step forward in conglomeration of cabinet power."

(1600)

And there are not many people in Saskatchewan, I suggest for your consideration members opposite, who would consider it a step of progress to step forward to conglomeration of Saskatchewan power.

And finally, the editorial concludes by saying:

We urge the government to reconsider. (We urge the government to reconsider). Streamline, yes; reorganize, yes; but do it in the open where it can be seen, dissected, and clearly understood.

And that's the nub of the issue we have here, Mr. Speaker, with Bill No. 5. And let me repeat that paragraph again:

We urge the government to reconsider. Streamline, yes; (no one's opposed to progressive reorganization); but do it in the open where it can be seen, dissected, and clearly understood.

And that means very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that it needs to be done in this Legislative Assembly.

Well what does the government say about Bill No. 5? What does the government opposite say about Bill No. 5? And I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that's most clearly understood by checking the record.

About Bill No. 5, the government opposite says virtually nothing, virtually nothing; about the same amount that it said about the amendment to change the quorums in the committees — virtually nothing. About the committees, the government said, we want to change it; that's all. We want to change it. No reasons. We just want it changed. And what did this government say about Bill No. 5? They say, we just want to change it. We've got more people here. We can out-vote you. It doesn't matter what the

reasons are — we're not saying. We just want it changed. And so the government opposite, Mr. Speaker, is saying virtually nothing.

Well I refer . . . and you have to look hard to find some statements from the members opposite as to what the purpose of bill No. 5 is. But after a great deal of scrutiny I was able to find a single paragraph — a single paragraph listed in the *Regina Leader-Post* of December 19th. And let me quote that paragraph, Mr. Speaker. And we have to listen carefully because this is about all that has been said. And I quote. This is an article written by Murray Mandryk:

While introducing the Bill last week . . .

And I suspect that the reference there is to statements made on either December the 12th or December the 15th.

While introducing the Bill last week, Deputy Premier Eric Berntson . . .

This is the Deputy Premier who accuses himself of being uncunning:

While introducing the Bill last week, Deputy Premier Eric Berntson said the legislation was needed to create the new department of human resources — a department encompassing minister Grant Schmidt's portfolios of labour, social services, the employment development agency, and the Indian and women's secretariats.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if that's really the reason this Bill is being introduced. Because if it is really being introduced to create a new department of human resources, labour and employment, would it not seem to be a whole lot more obvious, would it not seem to be a whole lot more out front, would it not seem to be a whole lot more open, to simply introduce a Bill to create the department of human resources, labour and employment. Would that not seem to be the obvious thing to do? If that's what you want to do, why would you not introduce a Bill to establish that department the same way every other department has been established in this Legislative Assembly.

So that is a statement. That's all we've been told. And it appears, Mr. Speaker, to be a bit of an arrogant statement because the government is not even waiting. It appears that it is not even waiting for the passage of this legislation to introduce the department of human resources, labour, and employment.

And let me refer you, Mr. Speaker, to a memo that I received on December 10. Now let's just check this for a moment. We all came together in this Assembly — let's understand the big picture — we came together in this Legislative Assembly on December 3, and we heard a Speech from the Throne — December 3, December 3. And in the Speech from the Throne it talked about new efficiency, and reorganization, and, yes, there was reference to the creation of a new department of human resources, labour, and employment. December 3.

On December 10, Mr. Speaker, I received a memo from

an official in the department of what I thought was the Department of Social Services, but obviously the officials of the Department of Social Services have got their direction already. They've got their marching orders already, because this official refers to himself as being from the department of human resources, labour, and employment, in a memo on December 10.

We came together December 3. There is a Bill which, we are told, is to create the department of human resources, labour, and employment. It is before us now. Today is December 22. On December 10, an official who has obviously been directed to refer to himself as from the department of human resources, labour and employment . . . and in response to my request for some information, Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised, I'm a bit surprised to note, that I am advised to, and I quote:

Please be aware that the Seniors' Bureau, along with the Women's Secretariat, and the Indian and Native Secretariat, and the Employment Development Agency, became (let me underline and repeat that) became part of the new ministry of human resources, labour, and employment as of December 1, 1986.

We stand here on December 22, 1986, considering a Bill which we're told is to create the department of human resources, labour, and employment — December 22.

The Assembly was called together for a Speech from the Throne on December 3, and the officials have been advised that as of December 1 all of these things have been already amalgamated into the department that we're told is the whole purpose, is the whole purpose — believe us — the whole purpose for considering Bill No. 5 before us.

So what does the government have to say about Bill No. 5? It appears, Mr. Speaker, it has very little to say, and perhaps the actions of the government are saying more than the words are saying. It would not be difficult to say less because the words have said very little.

And I would ask that in debating Bill No. 5 that there would be some members opposite — I would expect that the member who was appointed responsible for the newly-created department of human resources, labour and employment — should stand in this debate at some point in time and tell us why it is so important that in creating this new department, the one with the name human resources, labour and employment, it is important to introduce a bill that doesn't just create that department. It can create a whole series of department. It can do away with a whole series of departments, or it can take departments that exist now and mix and match and make some kind of concocted "concorcion" that nobody will understand.

So let me refer, Mr. Speaker, to some specific sections of Bill No. 5, and let me concentrate on sections 12, 15, and 17. And let's look at these sections, Mr. Speaker, in the context as well, because I want to direct most of my remarks in the context of the disestablishment, which is a nice-sounding phrase for getting rid of — a nice-sounding phrase for wiping out.

I want to refer most of my remarks and concentrate on the area of my critic assignments and responsibility as a member of this opposition, Mr. Speaker. And let us look at Bill 5 and section 12. This has been referred to by a number of people, and many would see this is as the key. I would put forward for your suggestion, as well for all the members of this House, that there are two other sections of this Bill that are also very significant and cannot be ignored.

What does section 12 of Bill 5 tell us? It tells us three things. That the cabinet can: one, establish, continue or vary any department and determine the objects and purposes of that department. Sounds reasonable. Any responsible cabinet would do that. You would establish departments, you'd continue them, you'd vary them. You determine the objects and purposes of a department — every department should have objects and purposes. It seems obvious.

What doesn't seem obvious to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is that cabinet would have the authority to do those things: to create government departments, to continue or vary them, and to determine their objects and purposes behind closed doors. I don't think on October 20th that the people of Saskatchewan — those 45 per cent, those 9 out of 20 in this province who went out and voted and were significant in bringing representation to the Conservative Party to form the Government of Saskatchewan — I don't think that those 45 per cent of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, had in mind that they wanted to elect a government which would, behind closed doors, without coming before the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, without making itself available for the scrutiny of the members of the opposition that they would be able to establish, continue or vary any department and determine its reason for being, behind closed doors.

I don't believe that that's what the 45 per cent said, Mr. Speaker. I point out as well that there were 11 out of 20 who said that they did not want the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan to form the Government of Saskatchewan. And I don't believe for a second that those nine out of 20 who voted that way on election day, who made that decision said: you know what we'd like to have, we'd like to have a little more secrecy in cabinet. We'd like to have a few more decisions made behind closed doors. You know what? Government is a little too open; that's the problem in Saskatchewan. Let's get rid of open government and let's make more and more decisions behind closed doors. I don't think that's what the people of Saskatchewan said. That's point number one, section 12, Bill 5.

Point number two from section 12, Bill 5, Mr. Speaker, says that cabinet, without coming before the Legislative Assembly, can — and listen carefully because this is another one of those nice sounding bureaucratic words — can “disestablish any department.” Nice sounding words which means you can cut it out, get rid of it, toss it aside, and you don't even have to justify that act to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

And then point number three, and this is kind of

interesting in light of what we've just heard, Mr. Speaker. If this Bill is passed, it says that the government have the authority to “determine or change the name of any department.” Well at some point, assuming that this may pass in amended form or some other, and that that phrase is still included, that means that sometime after December 22nd, cabinet can determine or change the name of any department.

Now I find that a little difficult to understand, Mr. Speaker. When I consider the facts, I find it difficult to understand how cabinet will be able to do that sometime after December 22nd when the officials from the Department of Social Services have obviously already been directed to refer to themselves as officials from the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment. However, this may not be obvious to me; it may be obvious to the members opposite, and we'll leave it to the people of Saskatchewan to judge whether it's obvious to them. They're telling me back home, Mr. Speaker, that it isn't obvious now.

(1615)

Well let's move, Mr. Speaker, to section 15 of Bill 5 and it says, and I quote, Mr. Speaker, that:

... a minister may engage the services of or retain any technical, professional or other advisors, specialists or consultants that he considers necessary.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, I understand that to say that a cabinet minister responsible for a government department can retain the services, by contract or otherwise, with anyone he or she wishes to carry out the tasks that the cabinet minister considers necessary.

Now that seems to me, Mr. Speaker — and as I talk to people in my riding and we talk to people around Saskatchewan — that sounds to me, Mr. Speaker, as though it's saying that the cabinet ministers can engage in patronage — can engage in partisan political patronage. They can just get whoever they wish to belly up to the trough and to engage in whatever kinds of exercises or activity the cabinet minister considers necessary to carry out the objects and purposes of the department — those very objects and purposes which can be amended and created and wiped out behind closed doors. So section 15, it seems, Mr. Speaker, is the patronage section — the patronage section.

Mr. Speaker, moving right along, let us move ahead to section 17, and this is a significant section for those, I would suggest ... I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that section 17, it seems to me, is a very, very significant section for mayors, aldermen around the province of Saskatchewan. I suggest it's also a very significant section for people who pay property tax. I suggest it's a very significant section, Mr. Speaker, for those people who have been forced to rely on social assistance in order to meet their very, very basic needs.

And let me read from section 17, Mr. Speaker. And it's my understanding that this is something brand-new — new and different to improve the Government of

Saskatchewan . I don't know if it's got new blue dots, Mr. Speaker, but it's new and different. And it says:

A minister may . . . enter into agreements on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan with . . . (b) any person, agency, organization, association, institution or body within or outside Saskatchewan (within or outside of Saskatchewan) for any purpose related to the exercise of . . . the powers or the carrying out of . . . the duties or functions assigned or transferred to the minister by or pursuant to this Act or any other Act or law.

What does that mean, Mr. Speaker? Let's take that legalistic-sounding phrase and translate it into real English — the kind of language that the people of Saskatchewan understand and believe. And what this says to me, Mr. Speaker, when I look at section 17 — brand-new, improved section 17 of Bill 5 — it says to me, and when I look at it through the eyes of the critic for Social Services, and I look at it in the context of an answer I received from the minister of whatever it is — Social Services or human resources, labour, and employment — in question period some two weeks ago . . .

And when I asked the minister at that time in question period whether one of the options in restructuring the Department of Social Services and the delivery mechanisms, one of the options being considered, I said: Mr. Minister, is one of the options being considered to shift delivery of social services from the province of Saskatchewan to municipalities?

And I remember, Mr. Speaker, that the minister stood and he said: we're looking at all options; we don't rule that one out. And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it is most appropriate for the mayors and the councillors and the aldermen of the cities and towns and villages of Saskatchewan to think very, very carefully about the implications of section 17 of Bill 5 because this section says, Mr. Speaker, that:

A minister may . . . enter into agreements on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan with: any . . .

Let's listen to it:

. . . any person, agency, organization, association, institution or body . . .

Could we read that to say municipality? Could we understand that to say municipality?

. . . for any purpose related to the exercise of any of the powers or the carrying out of any of the duties or functions assigned or transferred to the minister by or pursuant to this Act or any other Act . . .

Could it be, Mr. Speaker, that section 17 would allow for Social Services to be delivered no longer by the province of Saskatchewan; to be delivered by municipalities, by cities and towns and villages in Saskatchewan? And that that change could be made behind the secrecy, the cloak of secrecy of cabinet doors? Could that be, Mr. Speaker, a possibility that is included in section 17 from Bill 5? I

suggest that the answer is yes.

And I don't think that that's a wild, or radical kind of logical extension to take when I consider the questions that have been asked in this House, the statements that have been made in this House. And I ask myself: why are we dealing with a Bill . . . Why are we dealing with a Bill that allows us to create and get rid of and alter any government department when we're told that it has only to do with the department of human resources, labour and employment. Well that strikes me as a bit much for anybody to believe, Mr. Speaker, and I think that the people of Saskatchewan will find it hard to believe as well.

Well let me look, Mr. Speaker, because this may be my last chance . . . This may be my last chance to make some comments about the Department of Social Services, because as I stand here today I'm not even sure if we have a Department of Social Services any more.

But let me make some remarks, Mr. Speaker, and to concentrate the remainder of my remarks on the Department of Social Services, which has been described by some as the department that makes an octopus look like a simple piece because of the number of responsibilities and tentacles that extend from the Department of Social Services to the people of Saskatchewan, all across this beautiful province of ours.

And I focus, Mr. Speaker, on the annual report of the Saskatchewan Social Services for 1984-86 — '84-85, excuse me — which outlined the services delivered by the Department of Social Services. And you may ask, Mr. Speaker, why in the word would you be using the annual report from 1984-85? 1984-85 ended in March 31st of 1985, and here we stand, December 22, 1986. That was over a year and a half ago, about 21 months ago, Mr. Speaker. You may ask, why in the world would you be referring to the annual report of Social Services for 1984-85? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is very simple: because there is no report from the Department of Social Services for the year 1985-86.

Does that strike you as a bit odd, Mr. Speaker? It strikes me as a bit odd. And I note as well that there was a time that you didn't have to wait 21 months to get a report from a department, the Department of Social Services. But let's go with the best information that we've got, Mr. Speaker, and let's take a look at the Department of Social Services, if it exists, as it exists now.

The mission — I refer to page three of that publication which describes the mission of the Department of Social Services, and it says simply this:

The mission of the Department of Social Services is to promote human growth and development and, thereby, the well-being of the people of Saskatchewan.

And I think that that is a noble mission, Mr. Speaker. I think that is a mission that any one of us in this House could agree with. I think that is a mission for the Department of Social Services that the people of Saskatchewan would consider to be fair and

compassionate. And I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that after we have the new-fangled department, if it's not there now, that that will continue to be a mission of the Department of Social Services.

But let me move forward to what is described as the mandate, the mandate of the Department of Social Services, and it describes six — six items as being the mandate of that department. And let me quote. It says:

Given the priorities of the Government of Saskatchewan . . .

And let me just pause there for a moment, Mr. Speaker, and scratch my head, and say, given the priorities of the Government of Saskatchewan, the priorities of a government which in four and one-half years has brought us into three billion, three thousand million dollars of debt; the priorities of the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, which a year and one-half ago, under the pleasant sounding name of welfare reform — euphemistically referred to as welfare reform — which close to degrade and denigrate those people who are most suffering by the government's failure to provide employment opportunities.

So in a context, however, let us be fair, let us consider that the Government of Saskatchewan has the best interests of people in mind and let me quote then the mandate:

Given the priorities of the Government of Saskatchewan and the special needs of the people of the province, the department responds to its mission through:

Six things, Mr. Speaker, six things:

Providing financial assistance and related support services to persons who are unable to provide for themselves; (seems reasonable);

Providing for re-entry into the work place for persons who are able to be independent of assistance; (that sounds commendable, Mr. Speaker);

Protecting children against abuse, neglect and abandonment; (and none of us would disagree with that, Mr. Speaker);

Providing substitute care for children, youth and families; (that seems sensitive);

Providing rehabilitative and developmental services and promoting independent living for persons who are physically and mentally disabled; (and that seems to be a compassionate and reasonable objective);

Supporting community-based services and initiatives. (and who could argue with that.)

And so I ask, Mr. Speaker, would you like to see any of these taken away? Would the people of Saskatchewan like to see any of these mandates taken away? And I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the answer is no. And I would

certainly say that in my opinion that they should remain. I hope they are not removed. But I don't know. The people of Saskatchewan do not know, and they will not have the opportunity to know because reorganization will occur behind closed doors.

So how does the Department of Social Services measure its performance? Every efficient operating organization or business, government department, should have a way of measuring how its performance measures up to standard, Mr. Speaker, and whether it is reaching its objectives or not. And it state:

The department measures its success for gauging its ability to help people escape the dehumanizing cycle of dependency and to achieve as much self-reliance and independence as they're capable of attaining.

That strikes me, Mr. Speaker, as being a very commendable way of measuring the performance of the Department of Social Services. And that will continue? And I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we do not know. We do not know and we will not have an opportunity to know by considering the reorganization in this Legislative Assembly

Well let's just take a look, Mr. Speaker, at the kinds of services, because the people of Saskatchewan, are most interested in the services of the Department of Social Services. That's the thing that touches the lives of our friends and our neighbours and those people who sent us here to represent them.

And the services of the department, Mr. Speaker, are described — there are eight of them — there are rehabilitation services, by means of which institutions and support for community-based residential and other services for persons who are mentally or physically disabled are delivered through the division of rehabilitation services.

Social Services also has child and family services, Mr. Speaker, which include the department's foster care or adoption and child protection programs. Seems reasonable; makes sense to me.

The department also has youth services, Mr. Speaker, which involve serving youth generally and carrying out provincial responsibilities for young offenders, including institutional and regional services and the referral of youth to community-based programs and residential services. No one would argue with the importance of that.

There is the NGO or the non-government organization section, Mr. Speaker, which involves the support of provincial or community-based social service programs — community-based programs being delivered by people in their own communities for people in their own communities.

There is the employment support and job-creation services, which include vocational rehabilitation and the creation of job opportunities, primarily for social

assistance clients. And that seems to be an important task before us in Saskatchewan as well.

There is the income security program, and what a beating it's taken, Mr. Speaker — the income security program which includes welfare and income supplements for low-income families and senior citizens, another part of the services of the Department of Social Services.

There is a day care program section which includes licensing and some start-up support for day care operations throughout the province and the subsidization of low income access to child care. And finally, there is a seniors' bureau which includes communication, program consultation, and support for seniors' organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I don't mean to take a long time. It's going to take a while. I don't mean to take a long time to describe what the Department of Social Services does. But it takes a long time to describe what the Department of Social Services does because it does a lot of things. It does a lot of things for people, for real people, for the people who put us in this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and for their friends and their neighbours and their children.

(1630)

And somehow we're led to believe, even if we take it at face value, we're led to believe that some reorganization, which will take all of these things that I've just mentioned — and we'll look at it in a little more detail in a moment — all of these services, we'll lump them together with the Department of Labour and the Workers' Compensation Board and the Native Secretariat and the Women's Secretariat and the Employment Development Agency. And we're going to lump these all into one department and we're going to call that efficient? We're going to call that sensitive? We're going to call that meeting the needs of those who are least fortunate in our society, those who are able to benefit the least from the opportunities that exist in Saskatchewan?

Mr. Speaker, I believe that even you, in your objectivity, may find that a little difficult to conceive. I know that I do. I know the members on this side do, and I certainly know that the members back home do.

Well let's take a look in a little more detail, Mr. Speaker, at the services that are actually delivered under the categories that I've just described, and let's start with child and family services. Most significant, the children are our most valuable resource in this province. I don't think anybody would debate that fact. And the family is the core and the structure of our society, and the Department of Social Services, surely, is an institution or is a department which will enable children to have their needs met and to look at their futures with optimism and hope, and which will allow for families to maintain that very, very important family structure.

The department is responsible for child protection, single parent services, adoption, foster care and youth services, all of those included under the child and family services division, Mr. Speaker.

Well let's start with the child protection services. And this one will be of special interest to the former member for Saskatoon Westmount, Mr. Speaker. This will be of significant interest, and I don't know whether she has communicated with the members opposite or not; if she hasn't, I suspect that she will shortly. Child protection services, and let me quote:

The department continued to be responsible for investigating all reports of child neglect and abuse and for taking the necessary steps to ensure the safety of children.

And the rules for doing that are included under the child and family services division. And I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the former member for Saskatoon Westmount will take a great deal of interest in this section and finding out that the rules can be changed behind the secrecy of the cabinet doors.

Well, child protection services goes on to say that:

The goal has been to reduce the child's need for protection by assisting parents to deal with the problems contributing to or causing abuse or neglect or other risk to the children . . . Services include (Mr. Speaker) home making, parent aide, parent education or lifeskills training, emergency babysitting, recreational fees, assessment, counselling or therapy, and required transportation (in order to meet basic needs).

And I ask, Mr. Speaker, are these the kind of things that the people of Saskatchewan would like to see taken away? I would hope not, but we will not have an opportunity to review that before this Legislative Assembly, because that decision can be made behind cabinet doors.

The Department of Social Services also has a foster care program, and it is intended to provide a substitute family environment for children who are in temporary care of the minister or who are permanent wards. And the role of foster parents in the lives of children is essential, Mr. Speaker. Foster parents are regarded as colleagues of the department in providing a stable family situation for children requiring care. Foster parents also play an important role in facilitating the return of children to their natural families, a principal objective of the department, and I suggest that that should continue. But will it? We don't know, because that decision can be made behind the closed doors of cabinet.

Single-parent services, Mr. Speaker, are provided by the Department of Social Services for:

. . . information and referral and counselling and other pre-and post-natal support services to single parents. Assistance was given to mothers seeking to place children for adoption . . .

although in excess of 90 per cent of single mothers choose to keep their infants.

Services are also provided with the objective:

To quickly identifying the young mother who

requires increased services or whose infant might require protection;

To promote normal growth and development in infants who might be at risk;

To increase parenting skills and the knowledge and understanding of young mothers in areas of child care and development; and

To assist in maintaining the young family unit and prevent children from coming into the eventual care of the Minister.

And isn't that the most significant objective to "prevent children from coming under the care of the Minister." And will these services be taken away? I hope not, but we don't know. And we won't know because it won't come before this Legislative Assembly. That decision could be made behind the secrecy of closed cabinet doors.

Let's talk about adoptions, Mr. Speaker, because adoptions also come under the Department of Social Services:

... a major responsibility of the department ... plan of choice for children under the age of 12 whose ties to natural parents became severed and who had to come into the Minister's care. The focus of this program continued to be to place each child in an adopt in home best suited to the child's individual needs.

The department remained responsible for the recruitment, screening and selection of adoptive families. In all cases, adoptive applicants were involved in a home study which included a series of interviews and meetings designed to assess the applicants and prepare them for the role of parenting an adopted child.

An important task, Mr. Speaker. And could this be taken away? I hope not, but again we don't know because that's a decision that could be made behind the closed doors of cabinet.

Well let's move to youth services, Mr. Speaker. There's a long list ahead because the department is responsible for a large number of areas. And let's move to youth services and the services under The Family Services Act that was recently introduced:

The department continued to provide direct services in teen-parent conflict counselling, support services to unmarried teen parents, voluntary and protection services to young teens up to age sixteen years and voluntary care agreements for young persons sixteen and seventeen years of age where parents were unable or refused to assist to care for the youth. The department also assisted young persons, up to twenty-one years of age, who were wards of the Minister, (in order) to complete their education.

An important responsibility, Mr. Speaker. And will this be taken away? I don't know. I hope not. But let us keep in

mind that if we pass Bill 5, that can be changed behind the secrecy of closed cabinet doors.

Youth services. And I won't go through all of these in detail, Mr. Speaker. Let me just list some of them. They offer young offenders' services, alternative measures for young people, judicial interim release, and probationary services. Because unfortunately there are a number of our youth in our province, for one reason or another, who have come in conflict with the law.

The duties of a youth worker under the Act include supervision of offenders bound by probation orders (young offenders, and to assist them in) ... the preparation and presentation to Court of the pre-disposition and progress reports (to make their sensitive recommendations to court, Mr. Speaker, to attend) in court to provide information and advice, and ... other duties that the Provincial Director required.

Are these important services? Clearly they are. Will they be taken away? I don't know. I hope not. But if we pass Bill 5, they can be taken away behind the secrecy of closed cabinet doors.

The youth services refers to another service called community alternative services, Mr. Speaker. And what's that involve, you ask?

The Community Alternative Services Program was intended to be community-based and a highly visible alternative to custody for short term, non-dangerous offenders (young people). The program provided the Court with the alternative of sentencing an offender to a specific community program ...

To do that instead of to a period of custody or in lieu of probation. Community programs instead of incarceration.

This program gave the victim of an offence an opportunity to participate in the proceedings to the extent desirable, and (and that's a noble objective), with a view to recovering where possible an appropriate compensation for illegal actions against a person or property.

That sounds like a judicially sound principle to me, Mr. Speaker.

The program provided compensation to society as a whole where there was no identifiable victim.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, is that an important service? And I suggest, yes. Would we want it to continue? I suggest, yes. Will it be taken away? We don't know. But I remind the member in this House that if Bill 5 passes, that can be taken away behind the secrecy of closed cabinet doors.

Well, let us move to day care, Mr. Speaker. We've covered two of the divisions. Let's move to the day care division of Department of Social Services, and let us note that the department provides assistance to parents and parent boards wishing to establish local day care services

in their own communities. It offers start-up grants for day care centres and family day care homes, annual equipment grants and special supervision equipment grants for centres providing care to children with special needs. It also, Mr. Speaker, provides consultation and support services, where available, for parents and those providing day care.

And we have a large number in this province, Mr. Speaker. We have family day care homes run by private individuals in their own homes, nearly 400 of those, accommodating nearly 2,000 young children. We have day care centres with almost 4,000 spaces. We also have, through the divisions of day care, Mr. Speaker, an income-tested subsidy which goes to assist parents to meet eligibility requirements.

And I don't think, I don't believe, there would be a single member in this House, I would hope, who would say that there is something wrong with the Department of Social Services providing support for those who are in need of day care. But can it be taken away with Bill No. 5's passage, Mr. Speaker? I am sorry to say that day care services could be taken away behind the closed doors of the cabinet office.

Let's move to the NGO, the non-government organizations, which many of the social services in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, are provided by hard-working, well-intending people in their own communities who care about others in their own communities. And so, consistent with its mandate to provide a broad range of social service to the people of Saskatchewan, the department works closely with many NGOs, non-government organizations, and service providers. It provides grants and is responsible for organizations responsible for providing services to children, youth, and their families.

What kinds of services, Mr. Speaker? Classed as crisis-intervention services we have things such as after-hours crisis intervention, sexual assault services, services for the victims of family and personal violence— and aren't we becoming more sensitive to the crisis that exists there? Transition houses to provide some support for women who are forced out of their homes, Mr. Speaker, because they live in fear of violence, and to provide a secure and warm environment for themselves and for their children. Short-term crisis accommodation for battered women and children in safe shelters, Mr. Speaker.

And would any of us want those taken away? I think not. But can they be? I don't know. Because if we pass Bill 5, Mr. Speaker, once again that's the kind of service that can be taken away. Without coming before this Legislative Assembly, that's the kind of decision that can be made behind closed cabinet doors.

The Social Services also provides trusteeship services and counselling and family supports and assists with services provided by Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and mediation diversion services, Mr. Speaker, for youth provided in some of the communities in this province.

And are those the kinds of things that we consider to be

important, to contribute to the quality of life, in particular for our young people of Saskatchewan? I say yes. But can they be taken away? And unfortunately they can be taken away with Bill 5 behind the secrecy of closed cabinet doors.

Well let's move to another division of Social Services, Mr. Speaker. And I am sorry that it is taking so long, but I am sure that you can appreciate, and the members opposite can appreciate, and most importantly the people of Saskatchewan can appreciate, the responsibilities to people that the Department of Social Services holds as its first responsibility.

And let's look at rehab services — rehabilitation services — which are responsible for providing comprehensive and co-ordinated services to people who are physically or mentally handicapped, to ensure that their physical, emotional, and social needs are met, and to assist them to live and function independently as possible within their own communities. And that seems to me a very fair and a very sensitive commitment that the Department of Social Services would make to the people of Saskatchewan.

There are different kinds of ways that the department delivers to meet that objective, Mr. Speaker. Through the community social work and family support and the therapist services, it provides social workers in communities in four regions around the province. And family support services are designed to help the parents and their children in the initial adjustment to the realities of a handicap. And we can all understand the difficulty that a family goes through when they become aware that they have, within their circle, a handicapped child.

The community social work services are also intended to diminish or eliminate obstacles which normal family functioning might be caused by the handicapped — to eliminate those obstacles — and to assist families in the community service system in establishing a developmental model at a very early stage as opposed to corrective model at normal school entry stage. What does that mean?

(1645)

That means that the Department of Social Services has, as its objective, to assist families, Mr. Speaker, to allow their handicapped children to experience the normal developmental skills that other children would have, instead of waiting until they become school aged and then we try and correct it — instead of waiting to close the barn door, Mr. Speaker, after the horses are left. And that sounds to me, Mr. Speaker, like an admirable objective for the rehab services division.

And it also works to assist families and the family members with a handicap in making appropriate planning decisions about education, residential and life-style issues at appropriate times during their development. And can we ask, Mr. Speaker, is it obvious that these services should exist and not be taken away? I suggest it is. But can they be taken away? And unfortunately, if we pass Bill 5, it is another service that could be taken away without coming before this

legislature — a decision that could be made behind closed cabinet doors?

The rehab services, Mr. Speaker, also provides institutional services at Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw for 675 mentally handicapped people, and at North Park Centre in Prince Albert for another 185. And these are handicapped people, Mr. Speaker, who require levels 2, 3, and 4 care — who at this point in time are largely not able to be accommodated services. And it is important to retain these, Mr. Speaker. I suggest it is. Can they be taken away by passing Bill 5? Unfortunately, the answer is yes.

And that's not beyond the realm of comprehension, Mr. Speaker. Because I point simply to the experience of Tranquille, out in British Columbia about a year and a half ago, in which, at the stroke of a pen by a cabinet minister, numbers of people. Literally hundreds of people who were not prepared to live in community settings, who did not have community settings able to accommodate their very special needs, were turned out of the institution at the stroke of the pen, without any notice. And I would dread to see what would happen to people who are living in our institutions now and the concerns that their families would have if this were to take place here in Saskatchewan at the single stroke of a pen.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the rehab services also provides a small hospital program, and it also provides early childhood intervention services. And this is a service, Mr. Speaker, which provides support to families, particularly to young families and to families in their pre-school and their development stages to help families cope with the crisis, to cope with the fears, and most importantly, to learn to be a part of facilitating for their children an environment in which they will be able to experience a developmental process that normal children experience.

Rehab services, Mr. Speaker, also provides funding for activity centres which provide an adult day vocational program for individuals who are mentally handicapped, people who have limited motor and sensory development. And programming there, Mr. Speaker, addresses the development of life skills and socialization and recreation. The goal continues to be at this point in time for the individual's attendance at activity centres to develop sufficient social competence to function in a community setting.

And rehab services also, Mr. Speaker, provides funding for sheltered workshops, for handicapped citizens who may have slightly higher abilities to function, and provides specialized employment opportunities for those adults who have a fair motor development or minimal sensory limitations, provides training and the opportunity to engage in production and develop occupational skills, Mr. Speaker.

I would also point out at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, that those are people . . . And in case we think that we've got it all cased and there's no room for improvement, it's also worth noting that individuals, our citizens here in Saskatchewan who work in sheltered workshops, Mr. Speaker, do so without the protection of the regulations of minimum wage. And I think perhaps that there . . . I know,

as a matter of fact, after having talked to a number of employees, handicapped employees who work in sheltered industries and sheltered workshops, that that is an issue that is important to them, and I think is one that bears the attention of the members of this Legislative Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Speaker, rehab services also provides support for sheltered industries where handicapped people are working within the mainstream and within industry and I ask again: are these the kinds of services that the people of Saskatchewan feel are fair and compassionate for our handicapped citizens? And the answer is clearly, yes. Can they be taken away? We don't know because once again it's another kind of service that could be withdrawn behind the secrecy of closed cabinet doors.

Well there are: "Residential Services for Disabled Children and Adults," Mr. Speaker, that are provided with the funding of the Department of Social Services as well.

The primary objective . . . in the provision . . . of residential services for men and women with mental . . . (handicaps) remained to develop a broad spectrum of options promoting the degree of self-reliance . . .

That's maximum within their personal capabilities, Mr. Speaker. It's referred to often as the principle of normalization, where we believe that our handicapped citizens have the same rights to opportunity and have the potential to develop their skills, their developmental skills, given the proper environment and training.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we had:

. . . in 1984-85, 326 mentally (handicapped) . . . adults living in 48 group homes located in 23 communities. . .

The number is slightly larger than that now. I'm sorry I'm not able to quote you a more accurate figure. We had "forty children with mental (handicaps) disabilities," who were, in 1984-85, who were living in group homes and there were also . . .

. . . six group homes for physically disabled men and women; (which serve 50 people) a total of 50 persons were served.

Mr. Speaker, there were three training homes which provided support services, and still do, for 24 mentally handicapped adults; and approved homes around Saskatchewan, approved homes around Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, 191 of them providing accommodation for in excess of 400 people.

Seventy children in foster homes.

And a supportive living program in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, which provides support for those mentally handicapped citizens of ours who don't require to live in a home that's owned and operated by the Department of

Social Services or an NGO, but people who are capable, with a small amount of assistance, to live in their own apartments and suites in their home communities.

All of those residential services, Mr. Speaker, for literally hundreds and hundreds of our handicapped citizens, are provided with the responsibilities of the Department of Social Services. Should they continue? Clearly, the answer is yes. Can they be taken away? We don't know. We don't know because, once again, that's a decision that could be made behind the closed cabinet doors here in Saskatchewan if Bill 5 is passed. Respite services are provided as well, Mr. Speaker, through rehab services.

Well let me move to what some think, Mr. Speaker, is the sole . . . some people will think it's the sole responsibility of the Department of Social Services, and clearly it's not. And I refer, of course, to the income security and employment division of . . . employment development division of Social Services, Mr. Speaker. Through this division, Mr. Speaker, funds are provided to individuals in need to meet the costs of food and shelter, utilities and clothing, and supplementary health services, and for their families — for those people who are least able to meet their basic needs.

Now I point out, Mr. Speaker, that up until 1982, as policy of the Government of Saskatchewan, that these rates, as low as they were, that these rates were adjusted annually to meet the increasing cost for the basic necessities experienced by people with the least amount in our province. What's happened since 1982? We had an adjustment in 1984 and then we had another adjustment in 1985.

And so we ask: what has been the Saskatchewan government's record when it comes to providing for rights and to meet basic needs? And I refer, Mr. Speaker, to a newspaper article which answers that question. It's from the *Leader-Post* in March 27, 1986 and the words of that article I think answer that question, Mr. Speaker. These are their words, not mine. It says:

Study shows Saskatchewan cut welfare rates.

And what does the article say, Mr. Speaker? Let me quote. It goes on to say:

"Four provincial governments picked the pockets of the poor in the aftermath of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression," says a study of welfare rights made public Wednesday.

This is back in March, Mr. Speaker. And it goes on to say:

Calculations by the social planning council of metropolitan Toronto show that British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Prince Edward Island reduced the real value (reduced the real value) of monthly welfare benefits between 1982 and 1985.

Now just an editorial comment here, Mr. Speaker, because I think it's interesting to note when we read that, that between 1982 and 1985 — and it refers to the province of British Columbia, Social Credit British

Columbia; Alberta, Progressive Conservative Alberta; Prince Edward Island, Progressive Conservative Prince Edward Island, between '82 and '85; and Saskatchewan, Progressive Conservative Saskatchewan — I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps there's a pattern — perhaps there is a pattern. It goes on to say that:

David Thornley, the council's program director, said the three westernmost provinces had welfare rates in 1982 that were well above the national average.

And then it continues. And I quote:

We have generally argued that welfare benefits should be based on some realistic assessment of living costs.

Thornley said, what the council's latest study shows is that the 1985 welfare rates weren't high enough to give most recipients income anywhere close to the poverty lines. And I point out, Mr. Speaker, just simply on things like utility rates.

Here in Saskatchewan, people on social assistance are allowed up to \$55 a month for utility rates. Now I had a gentleman from Saskatoon call me a week and a half ago and pointed out to me — and this is a fellow who does not live with exorbitant means, Mr. Speaker — who said that although he was allowed \$55 for utility rates, and doesn't have a telephone, that he has expenses in excess of \$90. And let me just point these out, Mr. Speaker, because these do not strike me as being exorbitant; for his gas, he paid \$60 — pays \$60 a month; for electricity, another 15; for his water, 10; and for sewer, 5, and without a telephone, Mr. Speaker, that's \$90 a month. I don't think that that speaks particularly well for the record of the government of Saskatchewan in allowing those least fortunate of our citizens in order to meet their basic needs. And the article goes on, Mr. Speaker, to say and I quote:

Here are the council's assessments province by province.

And let me refer only to Saskatchewan. It says:

Saskatchewan has been . . .

And let me underline that word, "has been":

. . . one of the better providers for most categories of welfare recipients, but not for single employables. (And listen to this.) The rate for that group fell from \$517 a month to \$345 a month between 1982 and 1985.

From 1982 to 1985, at a time in which this province . . . we were experiencing an inflation rate in the neighbourhood of about 20 per cent, single, employable individuals in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, took a drop from 517 to \$345 a month. And I ask: is that the sign of a government that acts with compassion and fairness?

And when we look at the track record, Mr. Speaker, of fully employable people, whereby in 1981 we had in this

province — and I'm not proud of this figure, but it's a fact — we had 2,583 single, employable people. In August, and let me be kind, in August of this year, when the numbers are generally lower, we had 10,073 single, fully employable people who were unemployed, receiving social assistance, Mr. Speaker.

And so I ask, and let's check the mentalities: does that mean that between 1981 and 1985, when the numbers of single unemployed, fully employable people rose fourfold, does that mean that Saskatchewan people became four times as shiftless? Does it mean that Saskatchewan people became four times as lazy?

And I suggest not, Mr. Speaker. I think that in those four years, five years, that Saskatchewan people became four times as depressed, four times as disappointed, and four times as deserted by the government opposite in failing to meet its responsibility to provide employment opportunities for the people of Saskatchewan to provide for themselves and their families.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — And so when that's the track record . . . that's the track record, Mr. Speaker — in three years a drop from 517 to \$345 for an individual. And we ask ourselves, when that's a responsibility of the Department of Social Services, is that fair and compassionate rates for those who are in most need? Is that something that will be met by the Department of Social Services?

And I ask: is that the kind of assistance that will be taken away even further from the citizens of this province? And I hope not. But I'm afraid, Mr. Speaker, that if we pass Bill 5 it's possible to do that even further without coming before this Legislative Assembly, behind the closed doors of cabinet.

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Being 5 o'clock this Assembly is recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.