

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Education
Ordinary Expenditure - Vote 5

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise with pleasure to take part in these debates on estimates in education. And before I really go into these debates, Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could ask the minister if he would be so good as to introduce his personnel that he has with him tonight. He brought them in at a time when I wasn't in the Assembly. I was away representing this entire Assembly at a CPA (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association) conference, and I'm wondering if we could start our estimates, our debate on this, by having the introductions.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — On my right is the deputy minister, Lawrie McFarlane, the deputy minister for the department; behind him is Elizabeth Crosthwaite, assistant deputy minister; to her left, Kevin Costante, executive director of training; and to his left, Mike Benson, acting executive director, finance and administration.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The issue of education and education estimates is a very important one, and having the introduction of the officials here is also of significance, Mr. Minister, because the entire community, educational community - and including the parents and students, young adult students - are quite concerned about what is happening to education, about the abrupt changes that have come about in education.

And they're asking questions and wondering just where is the new minister taking the Department of Education because they had embarked on a course which was quite clear before. The entire education system has always been - and people involved in it - have been used to being consulted and used to knowing where they're going and used to having control over their education system. And here we have a minister who has dismissed the larger portion, a large portion of his department, and is starting out anew. And we want to today establish what direction it is that he is really going, if he knows what direction he's going.

You see, what happened, Mr. Chairman, was we had a Department of Education which, seven years ago, set up a study, a study to establish the directions of education for the '80s and for the '90s and would work even towards his favourite number - the minister's favourite number - the year 2000. And as a result of this study, there was a booklet produced which summarized the entire study, Mr. Minister. Now as a result of this, we were expecting that we were going to follow the direction that was stated in this booklet, *Directions*. The previous minister, the member from Swift Current, followed through on that study. The study was started in '81. She followed through

on it, laid a direction, and established goals which were adopted by the entire province and which educators and parents and trustees had ownership in. And to her credit, she established funding for that.

Now, abruptly, we have a change of minister, a change of personnel, and decisions that signal a change, a complete change in direction, without consultation. And that's what we want to establish today. Where is it that we are going? What has happened, Mr. Minister, that signalled these changes in direction?

Ask any school board member what has happened. Ask any teacher what has happened. Cuts by the Department of Education, cuts which were announced in the budget and previous to the budget, cuts of 1 per cent in granting to all school boards, cuts to the educational development fund.

This fund was established and people were asked to plan for five years. School boards diligently did this. They planned for five years, then suddenly they were betrayed. Right in the middle, right in the middle of their planning they were betrayed. The five-year program became a 10-year program, not with more money but with the same money - a 10-year program.

I didn't hear anybody asking for an extension of a five-year program to a 10-year program. I didn't hear anybody during the election campaign asking for cuts of 1 per cent to education. If anything, people in the province are willing to go and wanting to go with a steady course.

And that's not what they're getting, because immediately after those things happened, after those were announced, then we had an announcement of the repulsive treatment of firings, of firings of some 20 people in the department. People who knew and who had lived the development of the core curriculum and the development of *Directions*. A summary dismissal. And we will want to know why the minister made such sudden decisions. Why did he lose confidence in these people who had worked so diligently to work up this particular *Directions* and this core curriculum proposal?

So there are very important issues to be addressed, Mr. Chairman, when it comes to education. Education takes a full 20 per cent of our budget, of our budget of some 3.6 billion - a full 20 per cent. Education traditionally in Saskatchewan has not been politicized. Never in my lifetime has it been politicized to the extent that it has been politicized under this minister.

And that's why the people feel betrayed, because suddenly the direction that they were used to going in and the directions that they were going in have suddenly been switched. And we want to know where, and then why, and in what direction these things have been switched. Is it just a power grab? Is it just that the minister wants to grab power and manage things from him, Mr. Chairman? Is it that he doesn't have faith in the boards which were elected and appointed?

Let me give you an example. In my constituency of Prince Albert, and we're dealing with community colleges

which were established under a former government in the '70s, we had an elected board, a board which was partly elected and partly appointed - four people elected, four people appointed. This board had an unparalleled success equal to or better than any community college in the province. They had a record of success which was supported by the people in the community. They had a record of success which other boards were trying to emulate. They were forced to resign by this minister, by the actions of this minister. They felt compelled to resign because they could no longer abide by the direction that he was going, that they were going ... they were taking this particular community college in.

The minister talked earlier today about governance of community colleges, and he indicated that he was taking community colleges in the direction of autonomous government. And then he indicated also, of course, as he has over the past month, that the community colleges and the technical institutes are being amalgamated into one, and this one unit was being given autonomy.

And then he indicated also that the NDP agreed with the autonomy. Well that is partly true, but that's where he stopped. Because what he's done with his new super board is he has actually taken away autonomy from the community colleges in Prince Albert, in Moose Jaw, in Regina, and in Saskatoon. He has taken it away, and he has given that autonomy to one super board who he will appoint.

Now that's not autonomy, Mr. Chairman. He is controlling that particular board. All of those board members are being appointed - one big super board. No more control - does not believe in local control. These are questions that will be posed in these estimates.

It's a matter, Mr. Minister, when you're in the position like having a department like Education, it's very important to maintain credibility with your voter, credibility with the school board, credibility with educators. I have here portions of a press release made on May 14, 19987. This is a press release from the president of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and it says:

Recent unprecedented actions by the provincial government have put K to 12 education at serious risks.

That's why these questions have to be asked because this is a body that represents 11,000 teachers in the province. This is the body upon who the minister depends on implementing any changes, or the course that he implements ... that he authorizes.

And the statement is:

Recent unprecedented actions by the provincial government have put K to 12 education at serious risks.

It goes on ... The president goes on. He says:

The provincial government is in the process of decimating the Department of Education. These actions signal a major change of direction for K to

12 education and violate (violate) the long standing history of co-operation, collaboration, respect, and trust.

I never heard the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) say anything like that about the former minister. And I would advise that the present minister should consult a little more often with the former minister and should maintain the course that was set by the former minister and the former government, and maintain the course that Saskatchewan people want.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Minister, we want to find out where you are going, where you are trying to take us, and we will start by asking the question, questions related to your department. What is happening in your department? I want to ask you, Mr. Minister: how many people did you fire in your department? How many people did you fire?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, there were no firings.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Minister, he tells me he didn't fire anybody. Mr. Minister, how many people did you terminate or did you retire, or how many did you just ask to leave? How many did you dismiss?

(1915)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, there were 162 lay-offs, 162.

Mr. Kowalsky: — There were 162 lay-offs in the department. Of those ... Does that include people who were retired under the early retirement plan?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Within the Department of Education there were 178 employees eligible to take early retirement; of these, 72 per cent, or 128 in fact took early retirement. So we have 162 permanent employees whose positions were abolished, and we have 128 who took early retirement.

Mr. Kowalsky: — So how many employees are you left with now, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The estimates, under Education, which I think all members received a copy of, advised the legislature that we have 1,472.2 person-years, made up of 1,237 permanent, 235.2 non-permanent.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Now could you advise me how many vacant positions there are at this particular time?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I don't have a precise number, but I'm advised something in the neighbourhood of 30. If the hon. member would like, we can have that information for him at the next sitting of Education estimates, but our best guess at this point in time would be in the order of 30.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Now, Mr. Minister, you have advised me that there were 162 lay-offs, 128 early retirements. I want to clarify this. Is that number of 162 lay-offs over and

above the 128 early retirements, or does it include them?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The numbers 162 and 128 are mutually exclusive of each other.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Now, Mr. Minister, when you were dealing prior to the lay-offs and to the early retirements, how many people at that time did you have working on the core curriculum implementation?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Our curriculum development branch has 20 people in it. That however doesn't tell the whole story, in terms of work on curriculum, because there are a number of secondments. School boards, for example, to serve on committees which would make that number substantially higher insofar as who . . . how many are involved, if you like. But the branch itself has 20 people.

Mr. Kowalsky: — You've told me that the branch now has 20 people. But the question was: how many people did the curriculum branch have prior to the firings and prior to the laying off?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the curriculum development branch, as the blue book points out, had 25.8 and now has 21.8.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Of these people that were eligible to retire that you were talking about earlier, you were talking about earlier - 178 employees eligible, 128 took early retirement - how many people that did not take early retirement but were eligible, were laid off?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — There were 178 employees in Education who were eligible for early retirement; 128 took early retirement, and there was 10 who were eligible for early retirement but did not elect to take it and were subsequently laid off. And half of those, I'm advised, were in one particular area that was eliminated totally from the budget in terms of funding.

Mr. Kowalsky: — What was that area that was eliminated totally from the budget?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Educational media services.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Now did you lay them off, Mr. Minister, these people from educational media services? Because you've just dropped that department. Did you replace it with contract work, or what happened with that particular aspect of the department?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The production facility unit was completely eliminated. It is not used, and we aren't contracting it out or anything else. It's just a function that we're not utilizing at this time.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Was the decision to cut these positions, was it a result of a philosophical decision, because it's something you felt you shouldn't be doing? Was it a result of lack of demand for services? Was it as a result of just wanting to cut back finances and changing priorities? Would you explain that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The decision to eliminate this

unit was part of the budget process. It was viewed as a lower priority and for that reason was eliminated from the funding. I'm advised that it was responsible for the production of some TV spots and videos, those kinds of things. In the event, I suppose, that we need that, we could look at getting it outside the department. I suspect in some instances school boards undertake it themselves; in fact, I'm almost certain they do. So it was a lower priority area and one that came about as a result of the budget review process.

Mr. Kowalsky: — So, Mr. Minister, we've established then one little piece of information about a direction that you want to take. You don't believe that educational media and technology, and that is related to the portion of the department we're talking about, is priority. Or if it is, it's something that you're not willing to handle. It's something that you feel that the school boards should be taking over.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I suppose that's a fair statement. It was our view that it was a service that had become relatively expensive to provide against the backdrop of many priorities in the department. It's not as though it can't be provided as need be by other sources.

On balance, I think it was a reasonable decision because the acid test for all of this was to not jeopardize the quality of education. And this was one of those moves that we could undertake without jeopardizing the quality because access would still be there, albeit perhaps not through the department.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Related . . . You mentioned also earlier that it was a matter of priority. I want to know where you got this. Whose priority is it we were talking about here? Are we talking about the priority of the directors of education? Are we talking about the priority of the principals? Priorities of school boards? Priorities of teachers? Priorities of people within your department? Or priorities of parents?

(1930)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well I think I can honestly say, as much as I . . . I wouldn't want to suggest that it hasn't performed some useful function in the past. But at this point in time I can honestly say I haven't had one teacher, one director, one board of education, the teachers' federation, the school trustees, I haven't had one person raise with me that by eliminating this unit that somehow education is going to fall apart. In fact, I haven't had one person raise this issue with me at all.

And so I think that supports our view that it was a lower priority. It can be picked up if need be, and on balance, I think the right decision was made.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well, Mr. Minister, be advised that this is now July - it's holidays. Teachers and students are on holidays, and they probably have not been made aware of this particular thing being cut. And come September they're probably going to come along and wonder, now, what exactly has happened to the educational media services.

I haven't heard it announced. I haven't heard you consult . . . or asking directors or boards or teachers about it. And the reason I'm asking is to find out whether you got information from any of the actors in education to see if this was an area that you should cut.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the view was that the unit had become not all that widely used by the K to 12 system - point number one. And, in fact, who was using it more most recently was other departments, and it had become almost a tool of the bureaucracy, a tool of the bureaucracy of government as opposed to the school system. And certainly we don't . . . I don't think that's in anybody's best interest and certainly not the K to 12 system who we are here to serve.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Getting back to the lay-offs and the early retirements, Mr. Minister, could I have the names and positions of the 170 . . . 128 early retirements and the 162 people whose jobs were abolished with lay-offs?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I don't have that here. I could undertake to provide it to you if you so wish.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I'd like to be able to get that before the next time that we come together with Education estimates.

I want to ask the minister as well now about some senior personnel within his department. Number one, the first question relates to a deputy minister. Could you advise me, Mr. Minister, and could you advise this Assembly of the qualifications and experience of the previous deputy minister?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I don't have a curriculum vitae for the person you're referring to because, as you will know, he's no longer with the department. But the former deputy, Mr. Wickstrom, I'd advised had a Ph.D. in Education, was deputy minister of the Department of Education when it was then the K to 12 department for three years. Prior to that he had been a superintendent in B.C., North Vancouver to be exact; prior to that, served in the Saskatoon school system. He has just this summer returned to Delta, B.C., I believe it is, as a director of education.

Mr. Kowalsky: — We've established, Mr. Minister, that the former deputy had extensive experience in education, as well as more than ample qualifications in the field of education. Could you advise me, Mr. Minister, on the educational qualifications and experience of your present deputy minister.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The present deputy minister, Lawrie McFarlane, education: Queen's University, Ph.D., philosophy; St. Andrew's University, Scotland, master of literature, philosophy; University of Dundee, Scotland, master in economics. Previous experience includes, just prior to becoming deputy minister of the new stronger and enlarged Department of Education, was deputy minister of advanced education and manpower. Prior to that, associate deputy minister, Department of Finance. And between '76, '81, some various positions, including director of budget bureau in the Department of Finance.

Mr. Kowalsky: — You have hired a deputy minister who has very limited experience in education. An extensive background, but in the field of education, Mr. Minister, very limited experience, and that is only with the department of advanced ed. I would ask you to give me an indication of what the experience in the field of education your assistant deputy ministers have, please.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well I don't know where the hon. member is leading us in his questions, but if he is somehow trying to suggest that my present deputy is somehow not qualified, with one Ph.D., two masters, plus along the way, in addition to what I already gave you, was that he taught at a couple of universities, namely the University of Trent in Peterborough, and Carlton as well, I would suspect that the public of Saskatchewan and myself and my colleagues would be left speechless as to your logic in trying to suggest that he's not somehow qualified.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Minister, I'll repeat the question. But before I do, I'll make this statement. I had asked in the first case what his experience was with respect to the field of education. That's what we're after here because we're talking about education. Now I want to know also what - and that was my question - what the assistant deputy minister's qualifications are and his experience in the field of education.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Okay. Glenn Penner, associate deputy minister. Education: University of Saskatchewan, Bachelor of Education, 1970; University of Saskatchewan, Master of Education. Previous work experience: regional director of education, Saskatchewan Education; director of education, Saskatoon East School Division; for some several years, teacher, vice-principal, principal, assistant director, director, Saskatoon public school division.

Elizabeth Crosthwaite, assistant deputy minister. Education: Master of Arts in history at Carlton University. College: year in Athens; classical civilization archaeology; University of Toronto, high school teachers' certificate; University of Toronto, Bachelor of Arts in history.

Steven Pillar. Education. He is associate deputy minister, as well. Bachelor of Arts from York; Master of Public Administration, Carlton.

Don Wright, assistant deputy minister, Ph.D. Economics, Harvard University; Master of Arts and Economics, University of British Columbia; B. Comm., Economics Honours, University of Saskatchewan.

That's just the educational history of these four individuals. So I think the hon. member will see, as will the public of Saskatchewan, that we are well served by our officials.

And while I'm on my feet I want to take this opportunity, because you have raised the issue as it relates to *Directions* and where we're heading, and as well your seat mate and colleague, the Advanced Education critic, made reference earlier today to the blueprint for the

future as it relates to post-secondary education.

I want to tell you that two of the finest documents probably to ever come out of Saskatchewan education were, in fact, the *Directions* document that was largely tutored under my predecessor, the Hon. Pat Smith, the current Minister of Energy and Mines; and as well the document entitled *Preparing for the Year 2000*, which laid out the blueprint for adult education for the next two decades in this province.

And I just publicly want to say again, while we're going through officials, that although I have obviously some senior ones in the legislature here with me here tonight to help in these estimates, there are many, many people behind the scenes that have done a lot of very, very fine work in putting together these two documents.

The Saskatchewan people, the Saskatchewan children, the Saskatchewan students, those seeking opportunities in adult education, will be well served by these blueprints and the foundations that have been laid by these documents. I'm very, very proud of them, as we all should be, because they represent the culmination of a lot of consultation - on the one hand with the public involved - and a lot of research and tireless dedication by an awful lot of very fine officials. And I would just want that to be clearly on the record.

Mr. Kowalsky: — There's no question, Mr. Minister, about the support that the document *Directions* and the document core curriculum has by the entire community of Saskatchewan - that includes the professional and that also includes the consumers of education in Saskatchewan. The difficulty here is: what is happening to the direction that you've got? What is happening to it?

So you've just indicated to me, Mr. Minister, that you have replaced the top . . . that the top four people in your department, who were knowledgeable about education, in the field of education, and who were knowledgeable in the development of *Directions* have been replaced, so that there's only one. You've replaced them with people who are expert in finance, expert in finance.

Well we're talking education here, and we're wondering, what's happening. What's happening to the field of education? What's happening to K to 12? Which way are you going to be taking the province? And if you are taking us in a different direction, why don't you announce it? What's happened to your corporate memory of the people who have been dismissed, people who have been working on the core curriculum over the last four, five years, that have taken it to the community, taken it to all different divisions and different schools where the students and where the teachers are starting to take ownership of it, and all of a sudden the leadership is pulled out from under it. Now they have just established confidence in the people that were working on it. Then now they see the leadership is gone, with the exception of one person who is still qualified in that, and knows, and knowledgeable of what has happened. Are you taking us in a new direction?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The direction that we are proceeding in is no different before the . . . after the early

retirement and the lay-offs than it was before. I want to make that abundantly clear. The *Directions* process is intact, it's alive, and it's well.

(1945)

And on the post-secondary education, obviously we are taking in a new direction, because the people of Saskatchewan expect it if we are in a position ourselves for the information age and the knowledge-based economy that's rapidly emerging upon us and our young people and our young adults. And that is a new blueprint. It's a bold blueprint. It's an exciting blueprint. It's one that will set Saskatchewan education apart from the rest of Canada once again, and I would argue apart from the rest of North America, and maybe even the world. And we're excited about that. It's a new direction. It signals some change certainly, and a change in the right direction, I would argue.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Minister, here's a paragraph from a letter, a copy of which you should have in your office, but I want to put it on record. It deals with the release of qualified people who have given the service, given good service to the department. It says:

Surely your department needs a historical perspective in order to have a good sense of where it is going. Also the manner in which they were released (and "they" refers to the people in the department) shows that there is a large measure of either insecurity or arrogance on the part of the decision makers.

That means you, Mr. Minister. How could you fire these people callously and now say that you're still maintaining the course?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Point number one, for the record - because I don't think you would want their professional records blemished by an inaccuracy - they were not fired; there was some lay-offs. And I want to be clear on that again, because there's quite a difference in terms of one's work record as whether you were fired or laid off or had your position abolished.

For the hon. member to suggest that somehow, because the department last year had something over 1,600 people in it, and this year it has 1,472 person-years, which probably represents even, in fact, more people than that, that somehow we can't function, and that somehow we . . . Albeit that there was some people who left through early retirement who carried with them a great deal of knowledge.

And that's always one of the down sides of an early retirement exercise. You have no control over who leaves, because it is a voluntary process. And we regret that. And that's one of the down sides. But at the same time, to suggest that in that 1,472 people that are left behind that we don't have the expertise or those who had knowledge of the process, whether it be in the advanced education side or the Education side, would be a wrong conclusion. And because in the larger scheme of things the department still has 1,472 person-years as opposed to something in the order of 1,600 last year, and I think we

can quite well function.

We've got, I might add, just really good teams who have worked long and hard to produce some of this very, very exciting initiatives, whether it be on the K to 12 side with the announcement of the new core curriculum which was the culmination of some several years of study and consultation with the teachers and school boards and trustees and the public at large across this entire province. And we're well on our way with that now being laid out and curriculum development proceeding. Or on the other hand, in the post-secondary education side, the new blueprint - very exciting times.

Mr. Kowalsky: — It is precisely the reason that you stated, Mr. Minister, that the team had established something quite good, quite good in terms of where they were going in core curriculum. I find it very difficult to understand why you would encourage a dismissal, whether by firing them, whether by laying them off, whether by early retirement, that you would encourage a dismissal of people in your department who were carrying the ball on this.

Were you dissatisfied with their performance, Mr. Minister? Is there something that they were . . . Was there a direction that they were going that you did not believe in? What was it, if that's what was happening? Because it just does not make sense to take people that were working on something that had such solid foundations and to throw it away. It just didn't make sense.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the member is inaccurate in a couple of instances again.

First of all there were no firings; there were some lay-offs, yes. And secondly, the early retirements, we do not pick who decides to early retire. There was a package put forth for those who so wished. And we got into some fair debate this afternoon about . . . The NDP apparently would prefer that we walk around and hand out 2,000 pink slips. That is not our approach. It seemed much more reasonable to abolish vacant positions on the one hand, and secondly, offer early retirement for those who wish to take it.

In the case of Education, 72 per cent of those who are eligible for early retirement took early retirement. Yes, we lost some very intelligent and capable and experienced people, and that is unfortunate. That is the price you pay for an early retirement program.

On the other hand, it gives a chance for some of those who are well into their careers in the civil service a chance for some upward mobility and the rejuvenation of a department and of a service. And that's very useful as well in terms of their careers and what they can contribute to Saskatchewan education.

So to somehow suggest once again that the jobs will not continue as they have in the past would be erroneous. And you're wrong in your suggestion that there were firings, and you're wrong in your suggestion that somehow the jobs will not get done. In fact, we're on a

very ambitious course. And, in fact, I can . . . (inaudible) . . . with the hon. member, since he referred to the STF press release, I believe it was. And I have met with the STF leadership on more than one occasion since the budget came down, and even before that. And I have assured them. Because they've asked the questions too, about core curriculum and directions. Will it continue? Has there been a change of direction? I assured them, no.

When it came to core curriculum, the answer I gave there, I said: if anything, we want to pick up the tempo there a little bit. And I think that should be reassuring news to you and to all the people and the teachers of Saskatchewan. So it's not on the back burner. It's not a forgotten agenda item. It's still very much part of our agenda. We're going to be very proactive on it. We are not changing direction.

You know, one ought not to equate the fact that we have down-sized the Department of Education. One ought not equate that with some change in direction. I mean it continues to boggle my mind how I can now be in the third session, the third basically three-hour session of Education estimates, and you have yet to ask about students, the real benefactors of what we're talking about in this Education budget. You have yet to ask about students and about excellence in education and about having the training spaces available for the job of the future and identifying the opportunities in the future. Are the students not important?

I mean, I agree that whether we have person X in position B, and person Y in position C, is relevant and germane to some degree, but let's get into the meat of the things. Let's talk about education matters, if you like.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Minister, you can see why the people and the educators of Saskatchewan are frustrated. You first of all say that there are no lay-offs, no firings. They're lay-offs and they're retirements.

Well let me tell you about a conversation I had with a fellow who was so-called retired. He said, I don't have much choice. He says, if I don't retire, what's going to happen to me? I will lose a retirement package and I will also lose my job.

Now when you're faced with a choice like that, what do you do? You retire. And then you go around looking for a job. And this particular person who was a high-paid official with the department ended up taking another job in a school.

And I asked him, well were you asked to . . . did you see that you were going to get fired for incompetence or some method like that? He says no. And he had an unblemished record.

So then what else can we conclude, Mr. Minister, but that you are switching direction somehow. And we want you to come clean with it. Which way are you going? That's what we're trying to get at.

Now you talk about students. Who do you think this affects most? Of course it affects students. And if you change directions of the Department of Education, then that's whose being affected most, and that's why I'm

talking about it.

I want to ask you a couple of questions, Mr. Minister, about possible directions that some people are going, and I want you to tell me whether or not these are things that you are considering. Are you considering, Mr. Minister, mandatory external testing in schools? Are you considering, as your part of a new policy, mandatory external testing?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — First of all, as it relates to our direction and your observation that somehow we've changed course because there's been some administrative positions abolished. And as I said to your colleague from Moose Jaw North earlier today, I can appreciate the NDP sensitivity on this because you're interested in larger bureaucracies, and big government is better government, and the traditional NDP socialist arguments.

What we are interested in, what the thrust . . . and the basis for our budget in education was this. Above all, we wanted to maintain those positions that are important in the teaching and in the education, and that's the front line teacher. And that's why the operating budget was shielded as best it could be shielded from the belt-tightening exercise. We wanted to make sure that the students, those in the class-rooms, had the teaching component necessary, the teaching force necessary to provide for all the education for them.

And sure . . . I don't apologize for it. We made some decisions to chip away at the administrative side of the department. The fact of the matter is, government generally was top heavy administratively, and that's why the down-sizing exercise was aimed for the most part and focused for the most part at managers, not front line staff, whether it be in the public service, across the piece, or on the teaching front. Because we're committed to quality education for these young people.

An Hon. Member: — No, you're not.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — And I'll tell you our record . . . The Hon. member from Regina Rosemont says, no, we're not. Well let's put it on the record, what our commitment is that he says, no, we're not. Let's put it on the record. Let's put it on the record.

Between the time the NDP left office in '82 and we took office under our Premier, Grant Devine, in '82 and this year . . . Here's the story . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The hon. member says we're not committed. Well here's the story. On the K to 12 side, grants are up 56.8 per cent, up 56.8 per cent, and that's in the fact of the fact that there's 2 per cent less children in the K to 12 system - more money for even yet less students. Grants per pupil, money for the real things, not for administration but on the front line and the schools and the class-rooms, for the teaching forces and for books and for resources - grants per pupil up 60 per cent, and that's at a time when inflation of the CPI (consumer price index) rose 34 per cent.

And what was the NDP record in those days? Well their inattention to education forced school boards to increase

mill rates 69.7 per cent in their last six years. And during the time the PC administration's been in place, what's the mill rate gone up? Fifteen per cent. So who has been pushing back, who has been laying the . . . displacing their obligations, onto the local school boards? Well certainly that was the trick of the NDP: 69.7 per cent increase during the NDP days; 15 per cent increase during our time.

(2000)

So by every measure, Mr. Chairman, by every measure: grants up nearly 60 per cent; grants per pupil up 60 per cent - and that's in the face of inflation running at half of that - by every measure we've been committed to education in this province. And I ask the members of this legislature, and the public generally: when the NDP were in power did we have an education development fund to focus on quality education and more services in the class-rooms? No, we did not. And certainly we've had to stretch that out over 10 years, but I'll tell you, when the NDP were in power there was nothing but lip service given to education. That is the reality. There was no new core curriculum; there was no education development fund; there was no new Agriculture college at the University of Saskatchewan; there was a fund . . . Universities were being starved of funds, and the story would be the same for libraries, if we were to get into the debate on that tonight, Mr. Chairman.

So by every measure we have been committed to education, whether it be to the K to 12 side or the post-secondary side. And since the hon. member who's questioning me tonight wasn't in the House on these two previous occasions when we did estimates - when he wasn't in the House we talked about the pattern of funding under the NDP. We talked about the pattern of funding to the universities under the NDP, and the only time they ever saw an increase . . . And I know I've hit a bit of a nerve there for the hon. member from Regina Lakeview, because a number of her constituents are in fact heavily involved with the university and they know the sorry state that you left universities in; underfunded; equipment left unpurchased while you built mausoleums to everything but education.

And what was the pattern of education under the NDP administration, Mr. Chairman? Well it showed this phenomenon called electoral "wave-itis." Every time there was an election coming there was a blip in the funding, and then as soon as the election was over they were starved for funds again. And, Mr. Chairman, that is a fact and the numbers bear it out. They gave nothing but lip service to education; nothing but lip service.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, it's difficult to believe the rhetoric. The members on your side of the House, Mr. Chairman, may believe the minister's rhetoric but there's no one else in the province of Saskatchewan who does.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Minister, I want to start on the question of the presence of all members for these Education estimates. Never before, Mr. Minister, never before during my time as a member of the legislature have

I seen a minister who hasn't had the courtesy to tell members on the opposition benches when the estimates for that department are going to come forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Never before have we run this legislature in such a way that there is no advance notice to members before estimates for departments begin. And so what do we have? We have Thursday afternoon, when I happen to leave to go to an appeal hearing in Saskatoon, we were doing Parks and renewable resources. And lo and behold, the minister happens to notice that the relevant members aren't here on the opposition benches, and in the evening we suddenly switch to Education with absolutely no notice.

Now I say to you, Mr. Minister, if you want to make a political point about the fact that the critics on the opposition benches are not here, I suggest to you that first you extend the basic courtesy to members of this legislature and let us know when Education estimates are going to be done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Minister, I want to make a second point. And that is . . .

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

Mr. Prebble: — You say, Mr. Minister, that you offered early retirement to members of the public service. We on this side of the House say, Mr. Minister, that you forced members of the public service to take early retirement.

We know, Mr. Minister, that deputy ministers were evaluated on the basis of the number of people in their department who took early retirement and I'm sure that your deputy minister was no exception, no exception at all. Public servants had no choice. They either took early retirement or they faced the threat of being fired or, in your words, laid off.

Now, Mr. Minister, I want to raise a third point about the nonsense that we've heard from you this evening. You say that your objective in cutting back the Department of Education, that your objective was to cut back on administrative fat. Now that is a load of nonsense, Mr. Minister. The large number of people that you fired were front line teachers, primarily in the technical institutes. Over 130 of the 162 firings were teaching staff in the technical institutes. They weren't people in the administration.

And, Mr. Minister, in addition to that, most of the people that you singled out in administration were not middle-level administrative staff; they were senior-level administrative staff in your department who you obviously either wanted to get rid of or felt that those staff were no longer philosophically in line with the direction that you were taking.

Now, Mr. Minister, you talk about students. We'll tell you on this side of the legislature the kind of impact that your

budget is having on students. What do you think a 1 per cent cut in grants to school boards means for the average student? It means a higher pupil-teacher ratio in the class-room. It means less counselling services. Mr. Minister, it means less program options for students. That's what your cuts mean; that's what your 1 per cent cut means.

And I ask you, Mr. Minister, how do those cuts square with your commitment that you were going to make education one of the pillars, one of the four pillars in your policies and your programs? How does your 1 per cent cut in funding to grants for school boards - which is in effect a 5 or 6 per cent cut after inflation has been considered - how does that square with your commitment that education is one of the four pillars in your policies and programs, Mr. Minister? Maybe you'll explain that to the legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well I'm sorry if we somehow caught both Education critics off guard by calling estimates. It seems to me that we've all known for probably three months that we were going to deal with this department. In fact, you've probably had three or four months to lay awake at night and think up questions. But I'm sorry if we somehow caught you off guard.

By every measure the reality is today . . . And I deal in facts. I deal in hard numbers that translate into real quality in terms of education on the front line and our class-rooms. By every measure, as I talked about earlier, whether it's the university sector or the K to 12 sector, by every measure we can stand here and hold our heads high because we put more money into that system than the NDP ever did. By every measure. And in fact this year the blue book would back that up once again even in these so-called times of belt tightening and fiscal restraint.

Those are the facts, Mr. Chairman. And the reason that we will provide that commitment and continue to provide that commitment to education is because in the world of the future - the post-industrial age, the technological era, the information age, the knowledge-based economy - we don't subscribe to some of the views of the opposition. We don't subscribe to their observations about where the jobs of the future are going to be.

And I'll use the university as an example of how out of touch . . . because the hon. members were not here. The critics were not here when we touched on this at a previous session. And I refer to a February 1980 memo from the Hon. A. Blakeney, premier, to the Hon. D. McArthur, minister of Education and continuing education. And here's what the premier, here's what the NDP premier said. I mean, this epitomizes the NDP's commitment to education, Mr. Chairman. And what did the then premier, Allan Blakeney, say to his minister of Education and continuing education?

Well he talked to him in this memo about . . . He wanted to know the manner in which we intend to reduce the rate of growth of university funding. He wanted to know the manner in which we intend to reduce the rate of growth of university funding as enrolment declines in the early

1980s. Now have you ever seen anybody more wrong than that - talking about how we're going to reduce funding and enrolment declines in the '80s, when the '80s have been characterized by a time of high enrolments. I mean, these are not hard numbers to come up with. I mean, we know who's born in what year and when they're likely to end up in university. And yet the NDP premier of the day was giving the mandate to his minister of Education to come up with a strategy to reduce the growth of university funding. Wrong on one count. But it got worse, Mr. Chairman. And he went on to say:

And the methods by which we intend to ensure that Saskatchewan young people are trained in the skills which are required by a resource related growth over the next several years . . .

I presume he was talking about potash mines and the growth in that area. And we've seen what's happened there in the '80s in the potash sector. How wrong you can be! He wants to reduce funding; secondly, he suggests that enrolments are somehow going to go down; and thirdly, that the growth in jobs and job opportunities are going to be in the resource-based economy. And really, that statement, more than any other, is what separates the out-of-touch NDP with the young people, the young adults, and society as a whole today in Saskatchewan. And I might . . . That also is what separates the NDP from the Progressive Conservatives.

Everyone out there who has addressed the issue and given it some thought realized that the implications . . . And I don't case what label you put on it, because every futurist has a label. But this issue that we're talking about is so serious, the issue that we're talking about is so serious that we ought to rise above partisan debate on this.

I mean, this is . . . We're talking about the next two decades in this province. And I would ask the hon. members to join with me and let's rise above partisan debate and discuss what are the implications, what are the implications of the post-industrial economy. What are the implications for our young adults, and in fact our adults now in the work-force? What are the implications in the new economy, or the technological age, or the information age, or the knowledge-based economy?

And the hon. member from Saskatoon says, oh, come on. Well I would suggest to you - in fact, I challenge you - to read what virtually every sector in post-secondary education is saying. And I don't care whether it's the *Issues and Options* paper that the University of Saskatchewan has put together, or whether it's the report by the Community Colleges Trustees Association, or the work that we've done in-house in conjunction with a couple of conferences that were held, or The Canadian Manufacturers' Association, as one of my colleagues points out, the Canadian ministers of Education council. It doesn't matter which sector you go to. They might come at it from a different perspective but they all end up with the same conclusions, and that is this: we are in a new era.

And it's not as though somehow what we've done in the past, we've been wrong and we've failed, because we have not. And I've said that time and time again, and I say

it again. What we're talking about is positioning ourselves for the future. What we're talking about is making sure that we have the job opportunities identified, with the diversification that our province will undergo as we move from merely this agrarian age and the industrial economy into the post-industrial era, the technological era, the information age.

And there are new . . . And the hon. member from Regina Rosemont somehow suggests that we don't understand farming and farmers. Well he couldn't be more wrong. And what I'm talking about for the hon. member from Regina Rosemont is exactly that when it comes to farming. Because what are the kinds of headlines we see today, if one watches? What are the issues in agriculture? And I had a particularly good meeting in Melfort some several weeks ago after the budget. You know what the farmers there told me? It was information that was the key to success on their farm. You see, we understand the sense of those young, modern farmers - information, and knowledge, and the technology of herbicides, and the technology of bio-technology, and the technology of marketing, and the technology of sensing where the new markets are, is what they're interested in.

(2015)

And that's why you see headlines like this one in the *Star-Phoenix* a few . . . a couple of months ago: "Education: a key grain marketing tool." You see, that's what the new economy is all about. And the hon. member talks about how agriculture somehow is going to disappear off the face of the earth in Saskatchewan. And no, it is not. What we're talking about is what are the implications of the information economy here. And that's why we see that kind of headline, Mr. Chairman.

And I could give you other examples of the same sorts of situations, Mr. Chairman, where education is going to be the flywheel, if you like, for future economic development. And that's why I say the issue is so important. And we can debate process and I quite freely am happy to do that. But the reality is, if you want to cling to the past, if you want as a party to cling to the past - even with your youth wing, they do not want to - if you as a party want to cling to the past, and the signposts of the old economy, that is your prerogative. But every sector out there wants to go forward and address the implications of the new economy.

And we intend to go forward, Mr. Chairman, because to do anything other than that would be irresponsible. To not plan for the future would be irresponsible. To not address the question of excellence, and quality, and accessibility across this province would be irresponsible. To not talk about how we build this economy, how we meld our education system, and the job opportunities that are going to exist in the future, would be to let our young people down. And to not identify diversification strategies that make sense for this province, and not to provide the leadership in those areas would be a failure to the people of this province.

So I would suggest to the hon. members that the challenge is so great, it's too great in fact to let partisan politics stand in the way. And I say that in all sincerity. And I don't

pretend to have a monopoly on good ideas. But I can tell you, I've been mightily impressed by things, by, for example, the forward thinking of the University of Saskatchewan when they put out that *Issues and Options* paper that asks some very, very tough questions, including, in essence: do we have the courage to undertake change? That's what they were basically saying. Do we have the courage to ask the questions and face the answers? Not to reduce every issue to a simply duality, to an either, or; them, us; right, wrong; as the hon. members are trying to do here tonight. The issue is too big for that.

As a politician - and certainly you recognize the strength in it - as a politician, it's very easy to adopt the status quo and say don't; don't, you know, don't make waves in the water; don't ruffle feathers; don't have any changes in the administration in the department. You know, don't have any lay-offs; don't have early retirements; let the size of the civil service continue to grow 10,000 people during the '80s . . . '70s when you were in power. It's very easy. That's the easy way out, in fact, is to say the status quo will serve us well, and we can go on and on and on with that. There's nothing easier than to argue for no change. But there comes a time when you have to make change, not for change's sake but because it's the right course for the future. And that's what we're talking about here.

And I see the hon. members laughing and joking. Well this is not a laughing and joking matter. This is not an issue that should be written off with cynicism and scepticism. This issue is too important.

And the hon. members may not believe, as I said, about the realities and the implications of the new economy. And I don't care what title you put on it, or what label you put on it, but the reality is we're into a changed world, and whether you like it or not the world is going to change. And I would argue, come with us and provide some constructive input as we plot this course. Provide some constructive advice and guidance as we restructure the system and as we embark on distance education; and as we embark on literacy; and as we embark on a plan to make education accessible across this province like it has never been accessible before.

Whether we're talking K to 12, whether we're talking technical institute courses, whether we're talking university courses, at the end of the day Saskatchewan people will know that we're not charting this course because it is some bitter pill to be swallowed, because it is not a bitter pill that has to be swallowed. It, in fact, can be an exciting future.

Saskatchewan people have always opted for common sense. They know that there has to be changes. If anybody has recognized that, it's our agrarian society who have constantly had to adapt and to change whether it be to competition on a global basis or to compete with the elements out there. And what we're doing is right; it's right for our young people, it's right for our adults, and it's right for Saskatchewan and I ask you to join with us in this very exciting agenda.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, the original question, lest you forget, is how it is that the 1 per cent cut in funding to school boards and the firing — in your terms the laying off — of 162 personnel, most of whom were teaching staff, how that squared with your commitment that education was going to be one of the four pillars of your overall program and policy in the coming years. And I note, Mr. Minister, that you didn't answer the question. You didn't explain to the public or to members of this Assembly how, in effect, cutting school board grants by 5 per cent squared with your election promise to make education one of the four major pillars of your policy and program.

And the reason, Mr. Minister, that you skirted that question was because you're unable to answer the question. You simply can't square your election promise with the funding cuts that you've implemented since the election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Minister, I want to comment on a few of the points that you chose to make.

First of all, you talk about keeping education out of partisan politics. I suggest to you, sir, that you are the government and you are the minister that has politicized education for the first time in this province, and that you are the minister that has set a precedent in this province for treating professional educators in a highly unprofessional way. You choose not to consult with them. You fire them without notice.

You've created uncertainty in the technical institute, in K to 12 system in this province. You've demoralized the technical institute and community college system in this province entirely, sir. Your government and your government's record is not in the best interests of the students in this province.

You must be held directly responsible for a decline in the quality of education that Saskatchewan's young people will experience this fall, sir. I say that rests squarely on your shoulders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — You talk, sir, about the New Democratic Party's record with respect to university funding. And you read the 1980 Blakeney memo. May I remind you, sir, that a year and a quarter later, in March of 1982, the NDP government brought down a budget with a 17 per cent increase for the University of Saskatchewan. May I remind you of that.

Now, Mr. Minister, I want to get to the question of consultation. I want to ask you - since you declined to answer my first question about how it was that your 1 per cent cut in school board grants, a 5 per cent cut after inflation is considered, squares with your election promise to make education one of the four pillars of your plan for the remainder of the 1980s; since you failed to answer that question - I want to ask you another question, a very simple question, sir. Why was it that the Department of Education cuts that you undertook were

made without any consultation whatsoever with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and why was it that the cuts that you undertook to the technical institutes were made without any consultation whatsoever with the staff involved?

Why did you not consult with the STF and with the staff involved before undertaking these far-reaching cut-backs to education staffing in this province?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, I want to put on the record again, because I want it to be clear to the public of Saskatchewan, because day in and day out we have seen inaccuracies come from the members of the opposition benches - and I might add, the media as well - when it comes to the issue of funding for Saskatchewan education . . . Because the constant and inaccurate rhetoric is of cut-backs. That's the constant and inaccurate rhetoric.

The hon. member talked about our record. And I don't care if he's talking about our record in universities or at the K to 12 level. I read into the record here tonight earlier about the increases - 60 per cent increase at the same time that our enrolments have gone down 4,000 in the K to 12 side. Now how does he square that with the term cut-backs? How does he square the fact that when the NDP were in power, there was no such thing as an education development fund?

Now we can argue tonight, Mr. Chairman, about whether we should have had it spent over five years or over 10 years. But the reality is, when that member's party was in government, there was no education development fund. There was less money spent on education.

And tonight, what do we see the focus of the question is, whether it be the member from Prince Albert or the member from Saskatoon? Well, what about these administrators in central office in Regina? Somehow the department won't function without them, Mr. Chairman, when the question should be: what are you doing on the front lines with the students and with the teachers in the class-rooms? And by every measure the student-pupil ratio in this province is one that we can hold our heads high on, by every measure.

And there have been libraries that have been upgraded, and computers put into those schools, Mr. Chairman, because we recognize that our young people must be trained for the opportunities of the future by every measure.

And I want to flip this question around, Mr. Chairman, about not 5 per cent as the hon. member erroneously tried to suggest - a 5 per cent cut in the operating grant, he tried to suggest. The reality is this, Mr. Chairman, the reality is this, and it's in the blue book, Mr. Chairman: the money spent on education, and that's comparing apples to apples and oranges to oranges; we've adjusted for the fact that the department is amalgamated - Saskatchewan library, K to 12, post-secondary education - the number in this blue book this year is higher than it was last year. How does he square that with the question of cut-backs?

But put that argument aside, because we can debate that all night. The record is clear. Our record is clear. And the point that I want to make, Mr. Chairman, the point that I want to make, because this is really the issue: if you ask the people of Saskatchewan . . . because this is what the hon. member is saying: we're not spending enough on education, albeit it's a 60 per cent increase since the NDP left office, in five years. Now he's saying it's not enough. And I say, yes, education, like health, could always use more money.

But I would put it this way. This blue book says we are spending something slightly over three-quarters of a billion dollars on education in this province, Mr. Chairman. Three-quarters of a billion dollars! Sure, we could always use more.

But whereas the hon. members in the NDP want to carp about how much we cannot do with three-quarters of a billion dollars, you know what I hear the teachers saying and the parents saying, and the community colleges and the institutes and the universities saying? I hear them saying: Mr. Minister, I look to the fine things we can do with three-quarters of a billion dollars, not the things we cannot do with three-quarters of a billion dollars.

And that perspective was put to me by a person who I very much respect in the post-secondary education system. He said, Mr. Minister, we are proud of what we can do, not what we cannot do. And the hon. members may not be proud of what we can do with three-quarters of a billion dollars, but I, as part of this government, on behalf of all the taxpayers and the children and the young adults in this province, I am proud with what we were doing with three-quarters of a billion dollars, provincial dollars, in the education system.

And really that only tells half the story. Because, as well, the property taxpayers come up with a substantial amount of money. And if you add it all up, we're going to be well over \$1 billion in funding for our education system in this province.

(2030)

And so the hon. members may say, well, that's not enough. And I ran into this very question in a number of meetings that he asked about consultation. I held a number of meetings across this province, from La Ronge to Meadow Lake, to Weyburn, to Swift Current, to see what the people thought. Not some simplistic poll that the hon. members circulated around one segment of our post-secondary education system. And I talked to the universities and the boards of governors, and looked at the *Issues and Options* paper, and listened to what the community college trustees had to say. And the list goes on and on and on, Mr. Chairman.

And at one of these questions, the hon. member, the person there posted the question not unlike the critic here tonight. He said, you politicians are all the same. You talk about making education a priority. Why don't you put your money where your mouth is? And so I said to that hon. member, or to that person at that meeting, I said, you know, ma'am, you're right. I said, how would it be if we took every single dollar we collect in income tax from

every person in this province and earmarked it for education? How would it be if we took every dollar from the single largest source of revenue for the public purse, how would it be if we took that money and earmarked it for education? Would that be putting our money where our mouth is? And that lady said, yes, and that's what you should be doing. And I said, well, ma'am, last year in this province we did that and added another \$50 million besides, because we view, as do Saskatchewan people view, education as a priority.

And that's the kind of money we're putting behind our commitment - more than every single dollar we collect in income tax in this province. Now isn't that a commitment to education?

One of your own members today, the member from Prince Albert talked about how the Education budget - and I haven't figured it out exactly - is 20 per cent of the entire budget. One department, 20 per cent. I'm proud of that. They want to look at what we cannot do; I want to look at what we can do with three-quarters of a billion dollars.

And I raise this example of putting three-quarters of a billion dollars in perspective. Because if you ask the average person on the street, how much are you spending on education, or if you asked the average person on the street, well, what is the blue book on Education estimates say, the average person, the average parent, doesn't even know this book exists, much as we think it's so very, very important - as it is.

But if you ask them, how much should you been spending on education - should you be spending 30 million, 300 million, or 3 billion? - how can they judge? How can they know? They hear the inflamed rhetoric of the NDP saying, cut-backs, cut-backs, cut-backs, when it's not the truth.

And that's why you have to put it in perspective for them, that that education budget is more than all the tax we collect from every mom and dad in this province. And they're proud to pay it. And I'll tell you why. Because they're proud of the educational system and they'll continue to pay it because they want more than ever - and I made this point to the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation spring council. They are proud to pay it and they may well be proud to pay more, and I'll tell you why. Because they realize that in the future, more than it has even been in the past; that the job opportunities in the future are going to be linked directly to education. And in individuals, in provinces and in nations, economic security will lie in education. That is a fact of life in the information age.

And that is the kind of thing we have got to sort out, and figure out what are the new signposts going to be on this new economy. That's why I'm happy to have this new ... the conference, the symposium on post-secondary education, in which I'm happy to extend an invitation to you, in Saskatoon. I'm very proud to host that. And the one thing that I'm looking for to come out of that conference is for the signposts that we have so much difficulty grasping ... the signposts of the new economy, what are they?

We knew what they were in the old economy. We knew what they were in the agrarian economy. We knew what they were in the industrial age. But what are they in the knowledge-based economy? What are they in the post-industrial age? What are they in the technological age? What are they in the information age? These are the questions we must have answers to.

You know, John Diefenbaker, when it comes to talking about how much money should be spent on education and how do you put it in perspective for the people ... Because if somebody had told me six years ago how much are we spending on education or how much should we spend, I would have been like the average citizen. I had no knowledge of what the budget numbers were and if somebody had said 30 million, I'd have said, well, I suppose; how should I know? How do I judge? And that's why the perspective of income tax, I think, helps frame it for the average citizen out there.

I'm reminded of that when I recall the story of John Diefenbaker on one occasion, when somebody had made the point that the defence department was spending \$75 million on jet aircraft for the defence department. And the point was made: well, you know, is that too much or too little? And the average person, like myself, I mean, how do I know what a military plane costs? I don't know whether they cost 7 million or 75 million or 700,000. And John Diefenbaker made the point that that is right - the average person doesn't know that. But you tell them they're spending \$75,000 on plants for the Prime Minister's office and the whole world goes crazy because everybody knows what geraniums cost.

And that is the reality of the numbers that we deal with here sometimes, Mr. Chairman. We have to put them in perspective. I'll tell you I am proud, the people of this province are proud that we're spending three-quarters of a billion dollars on their behalf for education of the person who enters kindergarten right on through to those who are into the university and post-secondary levels, whether it be technical institutes or regional colleges.

And I'll tell you they're proud to pay taxes because they're proud of those institutions. And they know on occasion that there has to be some restructuring, and some of that's painful. Change is never easy, but, by golly, we're not going to let the people or the children in this province down. We're going to pursue this course that will keep us ahead of the rest of the world when it comes to education, which is the position we've always enjoyed. And we're going to continue to enjoy it by making these changes to adapt to a new economy, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Excellent filibustering. Now let's get to the meat of the matter. I asked you the question earlier: are you proceeding with plans to institute mandatory external testing in K to 12 system?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — In the blueprint that we put together, the document we put together, *Preparing For The Year 2000*, we raised that very question in there, or a

variation of it. I don't have any plans, but I think it's an area that we need to engage in some discussion in. I think, as well, for example, the university, in their paper, *Issues and Options*, raised questions around that same area. I don't have any preconceived notions, particularly about that question, but I think that it's one that we need to engage in some discussion in. And that was exactly how we raised it in our blueprint, in our paper. It is an area that needs some discussion, and I would suspect that we will engage in some discussion, although I have no plans at this very moment one way or the other on it.

Mr. Kowalsky: — The difficulty here is, Mr. Minister, is if you are entertaining those type of plans, that you would take exceptional care to do extensive consultation and open consultation with the members of the public, following up the type of consultation that was established by the department, by those people who were talking about the core curriculum. I think the people of Saskatchewan and particularly the educators would be very surprised and rather dismayed if all of a sudden you came forward and said, well we're going to institute external testing based on our consultations, in the manner that you did when you said, well we're going to amalgamate the institutions based on our consultations - when really there weren't any public consultations that took place.

I would ask further, Mr. Minister: is it your intention, at any time, to talk about centralizing local school boards and the mandate of the local school boards, as is being done now in Great Britain by the great Conservative, Maggie Thatcher?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — To your last question first: no, we do not have any plans; and secondly, you suggested that somehow we haven't, or did not undertake consultation. And I take rather rigorous exception to that remark because in fact one of the very first meetings I held in the post-secondary education was in Prince Albert.

And I don't know how the hon. member can stand in this legislature and say that although I, the minister, met with 550 individuals, groups, and associations throughout the winter, and I didn't undertake consultation. And in fact we prepared, and I probably sent you a copy of the summary of the public responses on the ministerial consultation meetings. And over and above that, I could probably tell you as well that I held a number of private meetings relative to this process.

And as well, I could tell you, as I've said before, that this idea for restructuring isn't something - and our blueprint for the future - isn't some magic plan that just dropped out from underneath the dome in this building. As I've said before, the university - both universities - recognize that we're into an era of change. And that's why the University of Saskatchewan undertook the very excellent *Issues and Options* review process. And if the members haven't read it, I would recommend it to you. I would heartily recommend it to you because it is an excellent paper and it talks about the very things we've been talking about here tonight, and really does put things in perspective for us.

As well, I couldn't ignore what that report was saying and

that process was attempting to address no more than I could ignore what the Saskatchewan community college trustees were saying in their report that they did after being in operation for 10 years.

So here I was faced, as minister, with two out of the three major groups in the post-secondary side - the universities, the community colleges - saying yes, it's time we look at what do we need for the future. We know where we have come from in the past, and it's a successful track record. What do we need for the future? The third component of course was the technical institutes which were an arm of the department. I couldn't ignore all those extraneous views any more than I could ignore what the council of ministers had, and their recommendations.

Everybody recognized the world is changing - I think everybody, that is, except the NDP opposite. Join with us in this agenda for change.

You know, if you go back into the roots of your party, into the times of Tommy Douglas, there was a party of change. There was a party that at that time authored change - the reform party. Today you people are more conservative than the Conservatives. You don't want to change anything. Let's stick to the same old thing. Don't make any waves. You're pro-establishment. Your party, in the past, was known as a reform party. Join with us and the rest of the people across Saskatchewan will recognize the need for change in this area. Join with us.

We can argue about whether we should have a single board, or four boards, or appointments, or elected, as the hon. member and I argued the other night - from Athabasca. But the reality is, there has to be change because everybody recognizes that the world around us is changing. And I know this embarrasses the hon. member somewhat, to be tagged with pro-establishment; to be tagged with the guardians of the status quo; when your roots have been more reform oriented. But I say, join with us. There is nothing to be ashamed of today in adopting a non-partisan stance in the very serious political and public issues that we face today.

In fact, I have said many times in this House that too often what we do, and what the media do, unfortunately, is reduce every complex issue to a simple duality - you are right, we are wrong; we are right, you are wrong; NDP versus PC; either, or; left, right - that kind of thing. It has no place . . . it has no place in the issues and the agenda of the future. We must take a look at what we are faced with and come to some practical conclusions. And that is the course that we intend to pursue.

(2045)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — The member seems to prefer to talk than he does to act, Mr. Chairman. The issue here is one of credibility, Mr. Chairman. And I asked a question that was quite concise, and I was hoping to get a reply that wouldn't have, you know, too much in the way of politics. The minister has been accused of being the minister who has most politicized education, and we just

saw another example of that. And I hoped that, when it comes to their educational system, educational reform is high on the agenda. he would come off of his high political horse and try to answer these questions, which I am posing in a very serious manner, about the direction that we are taking in K to 12 education.

Now the last question I asked related to the centralization of schools, whether you had any intentions regarding the centralization of schools as . . . And I indicated as you had done with the case of community colleges; as you did in the case of community colleges - and then he went on this long diatribe.

Now there is a concern, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman, about not going in a direction of more centralized control, particularly in education, the reason being, of course - I think the minister would agree with me - that the most efficient form of government in our country has been local government. They are the ones that have showed the most responsible course. They are the ones that haven't amassed deficits that will be paid for by generations to come. Now I'm trying to find out where he is getting his clues from as to where he's taking the Department of Education.

Now in Great Britain, one of the things that is mentioned in this article from *The Globe and Mail* of July 24 . . . It indicates quite specifically where the Prime Minister of Great Britain, a Conservative Prime Minister, has taken education. And one of the things that it indicates she wants to do is to shift the power from local control to national control. She is providing for creation of a national curriculum, and furthermore she is providing for a situation where schools will opt out of local authority and get direct . . . financing directly from the national government. And I want to make sure, and I want to get a commitment from the minister, that this is not a direction that we are going in. Would you comment on that, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well I'm not entirely clear about what Margaret Thatcher is doing, or intends to do for that matter, in Great Britain as it relates to education. I would make a couple of observations, though, about the press reports that you and I have both read over the last year as it relates to Great Britain, and as it relates to an observation I made as a result of attending the European ministers of Education meeting earlier, either late this spring or earlier this summer. And that is this - because I think it's particularly germane to the discussion we are having tonight; because what those stories point out and what I saw at the European ministers of Education meeting was this: that no matter which country one might care to discuss

They are all talking change. Now someone may say we should take this course, some may say that course, some may say this course, but the things that impressed me particularly at the Helsinki meeting was over and above the agenda items, if you like, was the sense you got in talking to the people, whether it be those from Japan there as observers who sat on my left, or from any one of the European countries or even the . . . I think there was the odd member observer nation there from the East bloc, is that everybody is talking about change, the changed

world economy, how we must change our system, how much we must take off the blinkers and be prepared to look at all options in making sure that we adapt to this changing world. That was what particularly impressed me. I suspect that is what's fuelling the high profile of education in the last election in Great Britain.

And I would suggest to you tonight here, the members of the opposition, and to the public in Saskatchewan, and for all the right reasons, you are going to see education become increasingly a public agenda item. It always has been important to the public, and it's going to be more so. As I said earlier when I talked to the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) annual spring council, I said there the expectations for our system are going to increase even higher than what they've always been - and they've always been high - and that is because the entire world is really on a reform agenda, and not just making change for change's sake.

Let me be clear about that: and not making change because somehow what we've done in the past has failed. I've said that many times. What we are talking about are the implications of this new economy.

And I referred to the *Issues and Options* paper, and I would just like to take a couple of minutes and refer to a couple of passages in it. The *Issues and Options* discussion paper, subtitle "Seeking Opinions on Issues Facing the University of Saskatchewan." I had, along with some of my colleagues, as perhaps did some members of the opposition, a chance to meet with President Kristjanson and Vice-President Blaine Holmlund who is chairing the steering committee, and I want to say publicly to them what a very fine exercise they are engaged in and also a very brave exercise, and that they've had the courage to ask some of the very tough questions that society is facing. And I was particularly intrigued when I read on page 2 of the report, a section entitled "The Currents of Change." And that's why I said earlier tonight that the course that we're embarking on is not one simply that we have decided on in isolation or without consultation, but in fact I would argue that many sectors have seen the same handwriting on the wall.

We may not know exactly what it means, but we do know there is change. And I would quote from this report. The hon. members have assured me they have read it, but it is such an excellent piece of work and one that will go down in history as setting a new course for our university. And it starts off on this particular section, 1.2, "The Currents of Change," by saying, and I quote:

The current era has been called the atomic age, the age of uncertainty, the post-industrial society, and the information age. These labels suggest that we are living in a period of change so profound that we are experiencing the turbulence of a major social readjustment. The underlying force driving change is the recognition that information and knowledge provide the individual, the corporation, and the nation with a competitive advantage, and with an opportunity to accumulate wealth and maintain a high standard of living.

The influence of this realization can be seen in the rapidity of technological development, developments in computer and information technology, the sweeping influences of genetic manipulation, and other forms of biotechnology, and advances in the physical sciences.

That says, it really says all when it talks about the basis for why we're undertaking the changes that the hon. members are having so much difficulty with in the NDP party.

And it further goes on to talk about, in the same section, Mr. Chairman, it goes on to say this:

We now live in, and depend on, a global community as well as a provincial one. The rate of change in today's society brings with it increasingly complex moral challenges. Individuals will need to make sound moral judgements in the face of an uncertain future.

And finally, on that same page, it talks later on and makes this point:

The challenge for the University of Saskatchewan is to pilot itself through this period of change.

End of quotation. And I applaud them, Mr. Chairman, for their recognition of the currents of change, their courage to ask some of the questions, to face up to some of the challenges of this new economy. And as they have so aptly stated that "The challenge for the University of Saskatchewan is to pilot itself through this period of change," so that too is our challenge in this legislature.

The status quo simply is not good enough for the new economy. It is simply not good enough. It will not do. And certainly for myself as a politician, or for my colleagues as politicians, the easiest thing for me to do would be to sit on my hands and do nothing; to not make waves; to just embrace the status quo - but we would be letting down future generations; we would be letting down the young adults in this province. We'd be letting down our province and our people and our country. And our government is not going to let the people of this province down, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Chairman, I'm embarrassed at having to listen to that answer. I asked a very specific question. Once again, the minister thinks he's making a campaign speech.

We're listening to series and series of cliches. The minister says education reform is high on his agenda. When is education reform ever not high on the agenda? Was it not high on the previous minister's agenda? Was it not high on the agenda before that? Can you give us a few more cliches, Mr. Minister? He says the status quo is not good enough. What a profound statement. He says: and the opposition will sit on their hands. What an original statement. Mr. Minister, I'm embarrassed having to listen to that.

I want to get to some specific questions, Mr. Minister. And I would ask if you could deal with them specifically, because I'm still trying to establish a direction, where we're trying to go with K to 12 education, and where your department is trying to lead us in K to 12 education.

I want you to advise me, Mr. Minister, whether you still have people, or whether you have hired people, to write papers in the specific areas related to six common essential learnings which we're dealing with as recommended in the core curriculum. And these are the critical and creative thinking areas, technological literacy area, independent learning, communications, numeracy, and social skills area.

In what way are you going to . . . What method are you going to use to integrate those into the skill development as indicated by the core curriculum proposal?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well as I said before, when it comes to core curriculum and its implementation, it's business as usual. In fact, if anything, we want to pick up the tempo there a little bit. The common essential learnings will be integrated into the new curriculum. And we're most advanced in the language arts and science areas.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Now in the language-science areas that you mentioned, what exactly is being done? How are you implementing this? How are you doing the integrating?

(2100)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — We have a number of committees, many of them staffed by secondments, if not entirely be secondments, and they are doing the work for us.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And that's relating to the ones that you are, as you say, in an advanced stage. How about the ones that are not quite as nearly advanced? Now I just want to get those straightened around again. How about critical thinking aspect, and the independent learning aspect, and the communications one?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The process is the same for all areas. It's just that in those two particular that I mentioned, that we're most advanced in them. In our discussions with STF they were very much of the view that this should be an open process, if you like. And we've made every effort to do it that way. And in fact, either this week or this past week there's been interviews as far as looking for individuals to do some of this work for us.

Mr. Kowalsky: — So my understanding is then, Mr. Minister, that you are seconding people to write papers on each one of these areas, and the purpose of these papers is to outline a plan as to how the six common essential learnings will be integrated into the core curriculum.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — When we announced the new core curriculum, part and parcel of that announcement was the establishment of an educational policies committee. And that is our sort of umbrella overseeing steering committee, if you like - made up of, as has been

traditional in Education, a very good co-operative effort and a very good co-operative mix, I would suggest - made up of representatives from STF and SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association), LEADS (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents), the universities; all the traditional players, which makes eminent good sense. Certainly I rely and look to the advice and guidance and good judgement of the professionals in the area. And they are, if you like, our sort of overall . . . if I could characterize them with the steering committee concept. And I'm presuming that answers the hon. member's question.

Mr. Kowalsky: — My understanding is then that in each of these six areas this educational policy committee is making recommendations as how to advance, and then you're doing the hiring after that, or the follow-up work on the advice of this committee. I would ask: is this committee . . . Has it been recently established?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The announcement of establishing this committee was made concurrent with the announcement relative to the new core curriculum. And the organizations have responded kindly by . . . Either they have put names forth or are putting names forth. And I'm advised that their first meeting will be early in the fall as the school term gets under way again.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well then what happens, Mr. Minister, to the six people, or six groups of people that were originally assigned by your department to write papers on these essential learning areas, common essential learning areas? What happened to those original six?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I think, based on the hon. member's question, that we can probably help you by giving the setting and where we're at in the timetable of some of this stuff. And based on your questions, I'm led to believe that there is some view in your minds that we're still in, what I would call phase one of this core curriculum process and the common essential learnings, when in fact we're - to use the analogy - more likely into phase two.

But to back up first a little bit. What we're talking about here when we're talking about common essential learnings are those basic things, if you like, that . . . those common threads that ought to be taught whether one's studying science, or history, or mathematics. To use an example . . . for example, the ability to write correctly. It's not just an issue that should be left to the English teacher, if you like, or to the English courses. Spelling mistakes, to use an example, ought not to go unnoticed whether it's in mathematics, or science, or English. And other examples, I suppose, would be the capacity of the individual in basic numeracy.

We have defined those common essential learnings through the process the hon. member was talking about. That's done. That work is completed. And now we're in to implementing it. Does that bring the hon. member up to date in so far as where we're at in this process?

In many instances . . . I think the six who you referred to, those jobs are largely done . . . and now we're in the process of threading it through the science curriculum, or

social studies, or whichever curriculum. And as I said earlier, we're farthest along in social studies and languages as I recall.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I understand what is happening there then, Mr. Minister. There appears then to have been some slow-down of the implementation of the process. And that's why exactly I wanted to get this on record, Mr. Minister. You see, from your department you had, prior to the firings, people who were very knowledgeable - knowledgeable in the field, and had established contacts in the educational community and had established a trust with the teachers in the field. And now, of course, you have to . . . once you've got the plan set up, the problem of implementing it becomes that much more difficult.

Now are you going to hire people to replace Bill Wells and Ken Horsman and Al Schell and Barbara Keirnes and Tom Quade and Phil Schalm? Are you going to replace people, or are you going hire people to replace them to implement this - to implement this core curriculum and the integration?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I want to put on the record, firstly, that there has been no slow-down; no slow-down at all. In fact, I would argue that we're ahead of where you think we are, that phase one has been completed; we've announced the core curriculum; the educational policies committee is in place; the common essential learnings have been defined. The curriculum is now being written so as to incorporate those, and we're most advanced in the two areas that I talked about.

So there has been no slow-down, and even the names that you've mentioned, most of them were not involved in the core curriculum process, so I'm sure why they are raised in this context.

What I would sense from your questioning is that we're farther along then you realize or give us credit for. And as I've said before, if anything, two points I would want to make. The directions established in *Directions* has not changed, and if anything we want to pick up the tempo a little bit on that core curriculum stuff because it has been in the making for some good long time.

We know now what we want to do; we know what the areas are; we know what the common essential learnings are. They are defined, and now we want to get these curriculums written and implemented. And that's the phase we're into, is implementation. We're past the definition stage; we are now in implementation.

And I realize, as have many teachers pointed out to me, that implementation is probably as critical as the policy changes themselves, and we're cognizant of that. We're not going to, you know, be stamped into this, but at the same time we're certainly not dragging our heels. We're going to continue down that track, realizing and cognizant of the fact that implementation is a very critical process and a very critical part and, as some teachers have pointed out to me, equally as important as the development itself of the new policies.

Mr. Kowalsky: — There appears to be some fragmentation here then in your approach, because of the

dismissal or firings or retirements of these people. I want to just dwell on that for a minute, and then we'll come back to the process itself again.

Could you indicate to me why . . . and I will go through these one by one to establish which ones in core curriculum were involved in them, with their core curriculum, and also what their reasons were for the dismissals.

In the case of Bill Wells, was he involved in core curriculum and what was the reason for his dismissal?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — No, he was not involved in the core curriculum.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And what was his reason for . . . what was your reason for his dismissal?

(2115)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The position was abolished. It was part of our overall down-sizing exercise and was abolished with the view that it would not place the departmental functions in jeopardy.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Place the departmental functions in jeopardy. Is that another way of saying that he was of the wrong political stripe, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — No. Quite frankly, politics has not, should not, will not, and I reiterate again, has not entered into this. As I mentioned to the hon. member, the position was abolished due to a general down-sizing exercise, but also with the view to making sure that that function could be covered off. And I take exception to the hon. member's suggestion. And quite frankly I don't even know what his politics is nor do I want to know, nor would I know him if I saw him, to be very honest with you.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Advise me - in the case of Ken Horsman, was he involved in core curriculum development, and the reason for dismissal.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Yes, he was involved in core curriculum. And this was, for the most part, a plain and simple example of the duplication that occurred when we amalgamated the K to 12 in advanced ed side. We had two bodies, if you like, and need for one in one position. and it's examples of the kinds of efficiencies and savings that can be garnered for the people of Saskatchewan through the amalgamation of the department, the one new strong department, that fits the public's agenda in lots of other ways. But certainly I think this is some of that administrative fat, if you like, that we were able to trim away without jeopardizing departmental priorities.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Could you advise me about Al Schell, whether he was involved in core curriculum. Could you advise me about the reason for dismissal.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — No, he was not involved in core.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And what was the reason for his dismissal, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — It's the same reason as for your first inquiry - position abolished, part of the general down-sizing, but done with a view to making sure we could maintain departmental functions.

Mr. Kowalsky: — With respect to Barb Keirnes: was she involved in the core curriculum development, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Yes, she was involved. But once again, when the two departments came together we had two positions that were identical in so far as their functions for the most part, albeit one was on the K to 12 side, one on the advanced ed side. We had a straightforward case here of duplication. It did not make sense to . . . it does not make sense to the government; it doesn't make sense to the people of Saskatchewan. We've captured some efficiency here and some dollars that we're able to plough back into front line services, into the classrooms of this province, if you like.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Now in the case of Tim Quade and Phil Schalm, were they involved in core curriculum development?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Phil Schalm, and I'm sorry I didn't catch the second one?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Tim, is there a Tim Quade? Quade. I believe the name is Quade. I may have the spelling incorrectly before me.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The Mr. Quade, or Quade I think you referred to, was one of those individuals who was part of the lay-offs as a result of the dismantling of the educational media services.

Mr. Schalm had worked on the early stages of core curriculum but not on the implementation stage, so was not involved in so far as the part of the program that we're into now. And once again that was a case of position overlap with the two departments coming together.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well, Mr. Minister, are there any other people from your department that were either dismissed or laid off or retired who had worked in core curriculum development?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — No.

Mr. Kowalsky: — We've gone through a . . . I've asked you about six different positions here, and I believe you indicated to me, Mr. Minister, that five of them had involvement in core curriculum. And I mention this because you can see why the community and people involved who had contact with them are somewhat apprehensive about the future direction of core curriculum because these people that have been working with them over the last year or more have all of a sudden seen them dismissed. And they're wondering, well now what's happening, what stage are we at. The continuity has obviously been dropped.

Now I want to know, Mr. Minister, whether you've replaced any of the . . . I want to know who has replaced each of these people. Who has replaced Bill Wells? Who

has replaced Ken Horsman? Who has replaced Schell, Keirnes-Young, Quade, and Schalm?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — If I have the question right, I think these will be the answers. And first of all, you mentioned that there were five people involved in core curriculum, and of the list of six you gave me, and if you came up with five based on the answers I gave you, that's a case of almost magic. And I would ask the hon. member to check the record and I think you will see quite clearly that four of the six had no involvement. And I don't know where you came up with the number five.

Now as it relates to the position held by Mr. Wells, it was abolished. As it relates to the position held by Mr. Horsman, there is no replacement. As it relates to the position held by Mr. Quade, it was abolished. As it relates to the positions held by Keirnes-Young, overlap there with a position from the advanced ed side. As it relates to the position held by Mr. Schell, it was abolished. As relates to the position held by Mr. Schalm, there was overlap there in terms of a position held by administrator on the advanced ed side, Marine Perran.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Minister, we have spent some time this evening discussing the core curriculum implementation and some of the planning involved before, and as it relates to our students now, and to our teachers involved, and to the people in the planning. And the concern being, how was this thing, how was this core curriculum proposal going to be filtered down to those people who it's intended to filter down to, and that's to the students.

My concern was to establish that a direction, that the direction, as started here, started in 1981 under a committee which was chaired by Mr. Karen Rongve, starting in May of '81 and followed through by the previous minister, and which you inherited and followed through, and after we finally came up with the program policy proposals which are indicated in this document which was indicated in 1986, but was, I think, commissioned some time before that.

(2130)

Now the issue here, Mr. Minister, is of course, is one of credibility, is one of differentiating between the rhetoric and the action. You see, we have considerable reason to question the rhetoric. For example, in a news release that was issued on your behalf on March 17, you indicate here that core curriculum marks the first major policy in program review in education since 1963. And you go ahead and you say it began in 1984. And quite clearly in here when you say it began, I guess you're talking about the core curriculum. It began in '84. This thing here says that according to the chairman's remarks - it says:

In May of 1981 I had the privilege of being asked to chair the minister's advisory committee on curriculum and instruction review.

This is the *Directions* report. And the *Directions* report very clearly, very clearly recommends follow-up of a core curriculum. But your cleverly, very cleverly written news release makes it sound like it only started in 1984 -

everything started in 1984. Well that's making a political point maybe, Mr. Minister. But I think you should acknowledge where it came from. And you wonder why people are questioning it, because statements like that make us wonder, make us wonder about the direction that you're following.

So I am concerned, Mr. Minister, as are teachers, as are educators, as are superintendents, as are school boards, that there is continual follow-up on the *Directions* curriculum. And you indicated to us tonight, you indicated to us tonight that you were not following the direction ... Or you were not indicating - and you correct me if I'm wrong - that you were not going to follow the direction of Maggie Thatcher with respect to abolishing more local control.

You indicated that you were planning to follow through and even speed up this core curriculum process. Now the difficulty, of course, is if you're speeding it up, how can you speed it up when the people that were involved in it, or a lot of the people that were involved in it, are all of a sudden gone? How many are left? How many are left of the original bunch? How many of the original bunch are left, is the question. How many are left?

The continuity has been broken. And that means the trust has been broken. And so it is an issue of credibility, Mr. Minister, and it's a very serious issue of credibility, because people in Saskatchewan do not like to see education politicized, and they're not used to having these sudden switches in staff. They're not used to having a department taken over by finance experts. They're used to having educational experts. They're used to having educational experts guide the Department of Education.

So, Mr. Minister, I ask you once again to maintain the course by doing continual consulting in the fashion that the Saskatchewan people have been used to - in the fashion that the previous minister followed through. Ask her for some advice; she's had an entire life career close to education, as have I, and we're quite concerned. We're quite concerned when we see indications of sudden changes in direction which affect the children of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, I would like the hon. member to clarify for the House what the change of direction is that he sees. What is the change of direction?

He's quite right when he talks about the excellent work done by the previous minister, the Hon. Pat Smith, in terms of following through on the *Directions* in getting core to the point we got it; now we're implementing it. We want to pick up the tempo of that process, if anything. I have not once tonight suggested that anything laid out in *Directions* is somehow going to be set aside, turned off, put on the back burner or anything like that.

So I challenge the hon. member to tell this Assembly, the members in this House tonight, exactly what change in direction he's talking about. Put it on the record; clarify your point. I don't know what you're talking about. What is the change of direction? Put it on the record.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Minister, I have put it on the record.

That's what we've been talking about all night. I've put it on the record. I have put it on the record, Mr. Minister. I have asked you about - and I will indicate one more time - I've spent all of this time this evening to establish to you that the educational system, the educational actors are deeply concerned, Mr. Minister, about your actions, not about your words - about your actions. And that's what it's about - a lot of talk, and you're very good at talk - but it's the action that we're asking, and that's what we want to continue maintaining a steady course, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Prebble: — I just want to make a few points, Mr. Minister, and I just want to review some of the major issues that have arisen this evening.

You, sir, first of all, have refused to answer to this legislature about how your one per cent cut in funding to school boards, and how your overall reduction in funding for the Department of Education, squares with your election commitment that education was going to be one of the four major pillars of your policy in the late 1980s.

You've also refused to answer, Mr. Minister, in this Assembly, why it was that you have, in effect, gutted large parts of the Department of Education and fired 162 staff without any consultation with either the technical institutes where those staff were fired, and without any consultation with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. You have failed to explain to this Assembly why you did not consult with those bodies, and why you did not consult with students, Mr. Minister.

You've raised, Mr. Minister, a concern this evening about why we're not spending more time talking about students. All these cut-backs ultimately affect students. The K to 12 cuts mean, Mr. Minister, less program options for students in the high schools, less counselling services available for students, less remedial services available for students . . .

An Hon. Member: — Where? Where?

Mr. Prebble: — Across the province. The members say, where? In almost every community in this province . . . and go to the city of Saskatoon or the city of Regina and begin to look at what the impact of the cut-backs means this fall. Go to the northern communities and see what the cuts mean.

In Saskatoon alone, for members opposite who ask: and what are the results? In Saskatoon alone most of the tutoring services that need to be available for remedial instruction have been cut . . . (inaudible) . . . I say to the member for Saskatoon Mayfair, he ought to find out what's happening in his own riding, in the schools in his own riding that he represents.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — This Minister of Education has failed to explain, has failed to justify why half the senior positions in the Department of Education were eliminated. He has failed to justify why half the senior positions in the Department of Education have been eliminated, Mr. Chairman.

And what we've seen in addition, despite the fact - and we don't dispute, Mr. Minister, the fact that your senior staff are well educated. What we do dispute, Mr. Minister, is that with the exception of Mr. Penner, that Mr. McFarlane and Miss Crosthwaite do not have the qualifications that justify giving them senior positions in the Department of Education. They are well-qualified persons, Mr. Minister, to be in government. They are not qualified to take on leading posts in the Department of Education.

And it's our position on this side of the House, Mr. Minister, that what you've done is, you've put people with expertise in finance, you've put people with expertise in finance in charge of education. And we say that it's not surprising that those people have been responsible under your guidance for implementing a major series of cut-backs, budget cut-backs, rather than being responsible for taking initiatives which will improve the quality of education in Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Minister, it's our view that you made an error in amalgamating the Department of Education and the department of advanced education. We believe that the people of this province were well served with two separate departments, with each one giving a special focus to its area of education.

And, Mr. Minister, one of the things that we are concerned about is that most of the people now with expertise in the K to 12 system at the senior levels of the department are gone. We think that that's an error on your part. Only time will tell, but the people of Saskatchewan have every reason to be sceptical, in light of the budget cut-backs that have come down today. And I'm going to turn the estimates over to my colleague, the member for Nutana.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The hon. member has somehow suggested that education and the commitment to education is not forthcoming from this government. And we went through the numbers earlier tonight about the 60 per cent increase, the 60 per cent increase in funding from this Progressive Conservative government to education. Our record stands head and shoulders above the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

And he talked about the fact that somehow funding the operating grants to 99 per cent of last year's level, \$3 million shortfall and a \$333 million budget, that somehow the educational system will fall apart. He conveniently ignores, Mr. Chairman, that those school boards will have access to something in the order of \$8 million of increased revenue because of assessment increases and new assessments. He somehow conveniently ignores that.

Now it seems to me if you have an \$8 million increase there, albeit a \$3 million decrease from the operating grants from the provincial government, that somehow they net out with more money. That seems to me pretty straightforward mathematics.

But the members opposite consistently try to suggest to the public that there are cut-backs in education. And

what has the focus of discussion been here tonight, Mr. Chairman? Because what they have not asked speaks well for what we're doing in education. Have there been questions in this legislature tonight, Mr. Chairman, about the front line teachers that have been dismissed because of this budget? And the answer is no. And the answer is no because school boards have kept the front line teachers.

Has there been questions tonight about what goes on in the class-rooms of this province, Mr. Chairman? The answer is once again, no. Because the opposition members are more interested in this administrative position in Regina versus that administration position in Regina, and did my friend get fired or laid off or have to take early retirement? That's what they're interested in.

I'll tell you what I'm interested in. I'm interested in class-rooms, and teachers in class-rooms, and the students in those class-rooms, and chalk boards, and computers, and books for the libraries.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — And I'll tell you what, Mr. Chairman, there was one change in that core curriculum process. And just so I'm not accused of misleading this House, when the hon. member from Prince Albert talked about this dramatic change of direction that the department has somehow taken because half a dozen senior administrative folks that for the most part, whose positions were duplicated, have now left the government - well, the change we made in that core curriculum process and this headline says it all, "Revised curriculum boosts English." And why did we boost the English, Mr. Chairman? Because the people of this province, including the 12,000 teachers, wanted not less time spent on English and language arts but, in fact, more time; not less, Mr. Chairman. That's the issues in education today on the K to 12 side. That's the issues.

And what have the newspapers from across this province been saying about this so-called budget cut-backs in education to the NDP talk about. Well here's one from *The Melville Advance* in May of this year: "Comprehensive school budget increases 11 per cent for 1987"; that's the headline for that one. Another one here from the *Prince Albert Herald*, I believe, and it goes on to talk about the school budgeting there and Mr. Pylatiuk is being quoted as saying, and I quote:

The way things are right now, we're not facing severe problems as far as programs and academic standards. But if the governments backs down on salary freeze, we're in trouble.

They're not facing any problem, they say.

And in this one here from the Swift Current *Sun*, an official is quoted as saying:

Students are not going to be affected by the budget cuts. All the programs will remain, and it will have a limited impact on staffing.

This one talks from *The Estevan Mercury*: "Public school board retains healthy status" is the headline on that one.

This one here from *The Estevan Mercury*: "Public school board sets surplus budget" is the headline.

This one here from the *Battleford News Optimist*. I believe it is: "World class library at U of R".

(2145)

This one from the *Assiniboia Times*: "Assiniboia School Division gets electronic encyclopedia." That's the headline on that one.

That's the kinds of things that are happening around this province. If you think somehow that the directors of education and the trustees across this province - because this year the funding from the provincial government is 99 per cent of what it was last year, and that with their increase in assessment revenue, 8 million across the province - if you think the directors and the trustees and the teachers of this province are going to somehow lay down, roll over and play dead because there is \$330 million coming from the provincial government this year instead of \$333 million, you're sadly wrong, and these reports from across the province back up my observations.

We have a fine system. It's had the money it needed over the years since the Progressive Conservatives come into office to make sure that education wasn't forgotten. It had the money in place for the education development fund that was so important in terms of quality and rebuilding some of those resources. And we're continued to be committed to that direction, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Chairman, I've been interested in what the minister has been saying this evening, and it appears that there is a communication problem. And the minister seems to be having some trouble communicating to this side of the House. But he is also having some trouble communicating to this side of the House, but he's also having some trouble communicating elsewhere in the province.

I have a clipping here from the *Star-Phoenix*, April 9, '87, and it states: "Education chagrined by decision to stretch funds over 10 years." And this talks about the education development fund. These people were so concerned about the minister's decision to stretch these funds over 10 years rather than five years that they issued a joint release on the matter. And it was the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association and LEADS, which is the professional organization for school administrators and teachers, issued a join release on the minister's stretch-out of the funds.

Now the minister may say, we're putting more money in, but he obviously hasn't got the message across to these people. Now I don't know whether the minister . . . I would think the minister would be able to get the idea across to the chamber of commerce, for example. Well, what does the Regina Chamber of Commerce say? On as

recently as June 1987, the Regina Chamber of Commerce has an education committee, which is examining three issues. Issue number one:

The Committee is attempting to determine the implications of the recent government cut-backs in provincial education.

Now obviously, Mr. Minister, you haven't got your message across to the chamber of commerce in Regina.

And you may, Mr. Deputy Premier, you may issue whatever comments you wish from your seat, but if you want the date, I can give you the date of the news release where the chamber of commerce hasn't got the message from the Minister of Education. And furthermore, the chamber of commerce went on to say:

The committee is extremely concerned about the removal of business education programs from Wascana Institute, and relocation of these programs at STI in Moose Jaw.

This same committee of the Regina Chamber of Commerce goes on to say:

The Committee is also examining the Department of Education's exclusion of economics from high school core curriculum.

Now apparently the minister hasn't got his message across to the Regina Chamber of Commerce. And it may be too that the minister has not got his message across to the Canadian Manufacturers' Association.

Now I'm putting myself at some risk quoting the Canadian Manufacturers' Association in this Chamber. And I must say, Mr. Chairman, that I quote the Canadian Manufacturers' Association without saying where I stand on the issue as they raise it, but merely the points that the Canadian Manufacturers' Association raises in their document entitled, "The Importance of Post-Secondary Education". And among other things, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce or the Canadian Manufacturers' Association says:

The federal government must reverse its present plans to curtail funding." It goes on to state that while the CMA fully supports the deficit-cutting intentions of the government, they feel that post-secondary education is one area that warrants more . . . funding.

Provincial governments must strengthen their weak commitment to universities and community colleges.

This is the Canadian Manufacturers' Association in July of 1987.

Provincial governments must strengthen their weak commitments to universities and community colleges. Here it is recognized that the real culprits of underfunding are provincial governments . . .

It goes on to cite that the province of Alberta and Ontario are not all that bad, but it does pick out the province of Saskatchewan as being one that's in the area of underfunding.

And the Canadian manufacturers, in this submission, "The Importance of Post-Secondary Education", gives me the impression, whether they're right or wrong, is that the Minister of Education of this province has failed to get his message across that he's doing better for education. What he's doing is he is stretching out the education dollar, and he's unable to make his points with organizations outside of this Chamber. And for that reason I think the Minister of Education is deficient in his duties as a Minister of Education. And I want to hear what he has to say about that.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the hon. member made reference to a report from the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, to a story in the *Star-Phoenix*, made reference to the chamber of commerce . . . And as it relates to the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, I have recently written them advising them of our new initiatives there. I think if you read their entire paper, you'll see that very much what we're doing is consistent with their view, quite simply, in so far as what has to happen to address the opportunities of the future and make sure we're positioned well for the future.

And albeit that the hon. member can find a headline from the April 9 *Star-Phoenix*, April 9, 1987: "Educators chagrined by decision to stretch funds over 10 years."

Certainly you can find that headline. But I would challenge you to find a headline from the era of the NDP administration, '71 through '81, where it even made reference to an education development fund. And the reason is, you cannot find one because there was no fund during those days. I could point out a number of other stories.

You want to make reference to the *Star-Phoenix*. Here's one from the *Star-Phoenix*: "Education system able to weather cut-backs."

That was the headline there. And the story talked about, and I quote from it:

Spending on a per student basis increased by 35 per cent between '76 and '86, putting Saskatchewan in a very favourable position to where the roll-backs compare with other provinces.

And the story went on. And you can talk about news releases from the STF and LEADS and SSTA. Here's one. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation news release, April 24, 1987. And the headline here is:

Education not all gloom and doom.

So let's put all sides of the story on the table. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, June of this year: "Very little in education changed."

Talks about, and I quote:

Meanwhile Ron Jevons, Chairman of the Prince Albert Public School Board, said his board expresses "cautious satisfaction, or satisfied caution" over the budget.

And here's one that I think speaks particularly well for accessibility in this province. *Leader-Post*, May 23, 1987: "Record graduation against the background of cut-backs."

And that speaks well for accessibility of post-secondary education in our universities. We had a record graduation at our University of Regina; I suspect, as well, the University of Saskatchewan. And yet somehow the hon. members like to paint a scene of cut-backs and lack of accessibility. And the reality is, there are more students consistently graduating from post-secondary institutions in this province than when your party was in power. Consistently - and that is a fact!

But to the point about the one per cent cut-back in operating budgets, and somehow we're bleeding them to death and jeopardizing the quality of education in rural Saskatchewan, well, I ask the hon. members this simple question: if somehow what we're doing on the operating grant side with our budgets to school boards, how is it then in 1981 the school boards across this province had slightly over \$30 million in accumulated surpluses, and in 1986 under this awful Tory government, with their awful cut-backs as you would describe them - erroneously I might add - how is it that the \$30 million surplus has risen to nearly 60 million? Now how do you square that?

How do you square it that when your party was in power, pressure was put on school boards to raise their mill rates, and as a result their surpluses stood at 30.694 million - which I might add was even less than what they had available to them in 1980. And now that same surplus is at nearly 60 millions of dollars. How do you square that?

Let's see some more of this mental gymnastics, this mathematical magic that you employ, to make the case erroneously and inaccurately across this province about cut-backs in education. And I'll tell you, Mr. Chairman, and hon. member, and the public of Saskatchewan, the truth is, the commitment to education in this province has been second to none. There has never been an administration who has put such an emphasis on education, whether it be at the university level, technical institutes, the new regional college system, or a K to 12 system. There has never been a commitment like it.

And one of the hon. members tonight made my point for me, when I talked about this electoral "wave-itis" that the NDP practised when they were in power. They talked about 1981 and the budget they brought down. In 1981 the budget that they brought down - was that budget ever voted on? Or rather the 1982 budget, the March '82 budget, which talked about a 17 per cent increase to universities. Was that budget ever voted on in this legislature in 1982, in the spring of '82? I ask all hon. members, and the answer is no. They played that fancy game of electoral wave-itis. The premier of the day, now Leader of the Opposition, the NDP party, said, well,

we're going into an election, I guess we better spice up the university budget. Let's pay a little lip-service here. Let's increase it by 17 per cent. And if you check the numbers, if you check the numbers, you'll find that they did the same thing prior to the 1978 election.

And I see the hon. member from Saskatoon, the advanced ed critic, winning a little bit - and so he should. Because the legacy that the NDP left the people of this province and the universities of this province was this: buildings that were run down; equipment that was run down; no new buildings; no new equipment; no new agriculture college; no geological sciences; none of the initiatives on the library side that our government has brought about; no university renewal and development funds; no education development funds.

By every measure you were a failure. You paid nothing more than lip-service to universities and to the K to 12 system. And yet somehow they would suggest that we are bleeding the school boards of funding, when what has happened under our administration is their accumulated surpluses are now 60 million, and when you were in government they were \$30 million.

Now how do you square that, hon. members of the opposition in this legislature? You can't square it. You couldn't square it then, and you can't square it now. The reality is, education has never enjoyed funding like it enjoys today. And let me tell you . . . and let me tell you, it could always use more money. It could always use more money, but it sure would never get it under an NDP, but it will always get it under a Progressive Conservative government.

Because what does our Premier have to say about this? What does our Premier have to say? Our Premier says this: there is always money for quality education in this province. There is always money, and that's the way it's going to be.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:02 p.m.