

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Speaker: — Recognize the member for Saskatoon Westmount.

Ms. Atkinson: — Saskatoon Nutana, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: — I corrected myself, but my mike wasn't on. I'm sorry.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Acting Minister of Health. On July 9 in this legislature your government promised the people of Saskatchewan that you were working on a number of different ways to get the hospital waiting lists in Saskatoon under control. At that time the waiting list was 10,000 people. Mr. Minister, on September 1 the waiting list for Saskatoon's three major hospitals is now 11,403 people. Over the summer months, Mr. Minister, that waiting list has increased by almost 1,500 people, and because of your government's cuts to hospitals, 308 beds had to be closed this summer. Where are the changes and improvements you promised at the beginning of the summer? Words are no longer enough, Mr. Minister, people now want action.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I can indicate to the member opposite that I know, in discussions with the Minister of Health and people in the Health department, that certainly new and innovative methods of trying to address waiting lists are being pursued by the Health department in conjunction with the hospitals, particularly the hospitals in Saskatoon where the greater waiting list exists, which is approximately three times that of the city of Regina. Which brings to question what some of the reasons for that may be.

But as I pointed to you . . . I will point out to you, Mr. Speaker, that such things as new technologies in day surgery, which will allow the throughput of people needing especially eye surgery and things of this nature for cataracts, are being investigated, and I think you will see some of these new initiatives have developed which should alleviate this waiting list problem.

Ms. Atkinson: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Words, words, words; talk, talk, talk.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — And it all means that people are waiting lengthy periods of time for hospital care in this province. Now, Mr. Minister, I want you to understand the exact nature of the problem. St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon has 4,428 people on its waiting list; City Hospital has 4,433 people on its waiting list; and University Hospital has another 2,542 people on its waiting list. Mr. Minister,

that's 11,403 people who can't get into hospitals; that's up nearly 4 per cent since July of this year, and many of these people require urgent surgery and are waiting weeks and even months for surgery.

What is the health Minister's job, if it's not to provide access to health care in this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, the waiting list in Saskatoon . . . the most definitive analysis of the waiting list in Saskatoon is based on the following thing. The member opposite continues to come with the same rhetoric that she's been spreading, and that the member from Saskatoon South has said on various occasions in the House, about the waiting list as it relates to surgery for emergency surgery — people don't have access. I hear in her rhetoric here today that, what's a minister's job if it's not to ensure access to the health care system for people who have emergency surgery, that sort of thing.

Mr. Speaker, people who have that type of surgery, and who are waiting for that, are waiting no longer than they have for a number of years — no longer than they have for a number of years. So they are waiting not very long for that kind of surgery.

Mr. Speaker, the waiting list in Saskatoon is based on basically two specialties: ophthalmology and orthopaedics. Hip replacements and so on, we do not deny at all that those are painful processes for people who are waiting for hip replacements. But the waiting lists, the greatest percentage of those waiting lists on the basis of those two specialties, two doctors, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatoon, two specialties, very highly qualified specialists in ophthalmology, account for more . . . or near 1,000 each on the waiting list for those two specialists. Now that is the choice that's being made by general practitioners in this province, to refer their patients to those two specialists. There are other specialists in the area who could do the work in this province if they would be referred to some others. That's one of the problems of the waiting list.

Mr. Solomon: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Minister of Health, and my question has to do with the waiting lists in hospitals in Regina. And of course the statistics the minister gave were in reference to hospitals outside of Regina, and one specific hospital in particular. In the past, Minister, you and the Premier have often ignored and tried to belittle the waiting list problem, claiming that it was unique to Saskatoon only. That's just not true, and you know that.

Is the minister aware that as of August 31, Regina's three hospitals — the Plains, the Pasqua, and the General — had a waiting list of 2,649 people? And that was a 23 per cent increase from the month of July — a 23 per cent increase, Minister.

The hospital waiting list problem is not unique to Saskatoon. It's a general problem caused by your government's failure to provide adequate staff and resources to Saskatchewan hospitals and your failure to

support alternate health care services. What specific action, Minister, do you plan to take to assist Regina's hospitals from easing this unacceptable, growing waiting list?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I have said in the past, and I will repeat again today, the waiting list problem that there is in this province is unique in Saskatoon. Saskatoon is the place, and I outlined the reasons for that, specific reasons for that. The member asks about Regina in particular. And I will say to the member that the waiting list in Regina is not — is not — a problem. It's not a serious problem in the city of Regina — the waiting lists are not.

Mr. Speaker, the key thing to remember always in dealing with waiting lists is the following: how long does the individual patient wait for access to the hospital for the surgery? It's the length of time, Mr. Speaker, it's the length of time, not the number of people that are waiting. The length of time is the key thing that we all must be aware of.

That's not what the member talks about. And the member very deliberately, I submit, chooses not to talk about the length of time which is acceptable in Regina, but he chooses to talk about the numbers because he believes that these large numbers will scare people, frankly. And, Mr. Speaker, they are doing that, but it's not legitimate to do that.

Mr. Solomon: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. The doctors in this city say differently. The waiting lists are growing at an alarming rate — a 23 per cent increase, Mr. Minister. The Acting Minister of Health, prior to you arriving this afternoon, Mr. Minister, indicated there are new and innovative ways of dealing with these waiting lists. I'm wondering if one of the new ideas and innovative ways that you are using is to perhaps be shutting down on holidays and shutting down on weekends, so that you can make up for some of the lost revenues that you've spent in a careless fashion. Can you tell us that?

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, once again, the length of the wait in Regina, and therefore for southern Saskatchewan residents, is not increasing — is not increasing. The member is trying to raise the issue of major waiting list problems in Regina. They do not exist, Mr. Speaker — they do not exist. The Regina hospitals, to serve southern Saskatchewan, are able to serve southern Saskatchewan as it relates to the specialty services they provide.

There is a problem in Saskatoon which we are trying to address, and it's related to basically the two specialties that I outlined — ophthalmology and orthopaedic, those two — and a couple of others to a smaller degree. So, Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina, while he will try to raise the problem of Regina and say that it's up on the same level as Saskatoon, it's not the case, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, the minister gives us more words. He gave us words about the so-called solution to the prescription drug program, and there is no solution. He gives us today words about the difficulties

that people are facing about getting into hospitals, and says to this House and to the public of Saskatchewan that over a one-month period an increase in the waiting lists in Regina of 23 per cent is not a serious problem.

I ask the minister opposite, Mr. Speaker, how can you, Mr. Minister, justify in this House, and to those people who are waiting to get some rather serious operations, an increase of 23 per cent in one month?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Once again, Mr. Speaker, the member refers to the number of people waiting, rather than the length of time the individual waits for the individual procedures. Mr. Speaker, they are not, in Regina, waiting longer. They are not, in Regina, waiting longer than they have for a good number of years. That's the best information I have, and I believe it to be absolutely accurate, Mr. Speaker.

Waiting Lists at Technical Institutes

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier, in the absence of the Minister of Education, and it also deals with waiting lists, this time the long waiting lists at Saskatchewan's technical institutes, Mr. Premier.

Those waiting lists come directly, in part, as a result of the cuts in instructors and programs that you implemented this summer, and I want to ask you, Mr. Premier: are you aware that 3,690 young people who were qualified to enter the Kelsey technical institute in Saskatoon this fall were turned away? This fall it was your government's decision to abolish 600 student positions at Kelsey, and to wipe out 100 instructional positions. And I ask you, sir, in light of those figures, will you now admit that your government's cuts at the Kelsey institute have served to deny access to Saskatchewan young people to technical education in this province, and have forced many of those young people to leave Saskatchewan in search of an education?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we have expanded spaces throughout the province of Saskatchewan, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, and we find now that people in Meadow Lake can take courses, people in Lloydminster. And in fact, you don't hear the complaints that people in Regina had to go to Moose Jaw, or people in Moose Jaw had to go to Regina. And frankly, people in the Estevan area and others had to go some place anyway. So the combination of more spaces throughout rural Saskatchewan has, indeed, improved the situation for a great number of people across the province.

Now you know as well as I do that our expenditures with respect to education over the last four or five years have been dramatically increased — dramatically increased. So with the combination of the changes in various places like Lloydminster, like Meadow Lake, and others that can accommodate people there, we naturally see the improvements.

Now at the same time you will find across Canada, I'm sure, that more and more young people want to get a better education, and we endorse that. In fact, many of the things we're doing with respect to welfare reform and others, encourage people to go into technical schools, universities, finish their grade 12, because that's the kind of thing that we should be doing.

So you can't stand there and say that we have more people interested in education and say that that's wrong. No, you can't say that. You've got to say that it's right that they are interested and that we're expanding facilities throughout the province.

Mr. Prebble: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The Premier claims falsely that he's increased technical school education in rural Saskatchewan. He knows the net effect of his policies has been to reduce at least 1,200 student positions in this province at the technical schools.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier a specific question with respect to cuts in health care training positions at the technical institutes, and specifically at Kelsey. And I want to ask him: in light of the former comments that were made by the Minister of Health in this question period, will he now admit to the young people of Saskatchewan that the reason that his government cut back on diploma nursing training at Kelsey was because you were cutting funds to Saskatchewan hospitals and hiring less nurses?

Will you admit that the reason that you cut back on the program for certified nursing assistants and abolished it at Kelsey was because you're cutting back on rehabilitation services in this province and you're underfeeding home care?

And will you admit, Mr. Premier, again, that the reason that you cut the dental therapist program at Wascana and the dental assistant training program at Kelsey is because you were eliminating the school-based dental care plan; in other words, your cuts in health care training are directly related to your undermining of medicare in this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, perhaps what I could offer to do is take the hon. member on a tour of the new facilities in the province of Saskatchewan. The hon. members knows, Mr. Speaker, that we built — we built — the brand-new technical institute in northern Saskatchewan in Prince Albert. We built that. And the people asked it. They wouldn't build it.

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. The Premier is attempting to answer the question. It was a fairly long supplementary, unfortunately, but we did allow it because the member seemed very, very interested in getting his points across. However, now I think it's only fair we allow the Premier to answer the supplementary.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I could just say to the hon. member: he knows, and he should at least be fair to the public, to identify the new educational institutions, the new rehab centre — I could take you across Regina and show you that; you won't admit that in fact it's being built; you didn't build it — the new technical school, the new spaces.

And with respect to changes in education, you know, people like you, in all fairness, can say no, we'll never change the way we teach; we will never keep up with the rest of the world; we'll just stay in the status quo.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows, he knows in his own heart, that the education has to be adapted to the global village and the things that are going on. We know that; you know that. But you don't have the courage, the political courage, to stand up in front of your constituents and others here and say: no, we have to make some changes; we have to make sure that Canadians can compete with Americans; Canadians can compete with the Japanese.

And you're afraid, politically, to stand up and say that we need that those kinds of changes. We built technical institutions; we've expanded the university; we've got a new College of Agriculture; we've built a brand new rehab centre here. And you even deny yourself the right, and your constituents', even, to acknowledge the improvements and changes that are necessary right across Canada and led by the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A new question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Premier, we are committed to preparing for training for the year 2000, but in consultation with faculty in the technical institutes, not in the absence of that consultation.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — And if you're suggesting we don't need health care training for the year 2000, then you ought to go and try getting elected in some other province other than Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now my new question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, relates to waiting lists at Wascana technical institute. Mr. Premier, are you aware that just over 1,500 qualified students were denied entry to Wascana institute for training this fall? And in addition, Mr. Premier, are you aware that another 972 young people are on a waiting list for entry to competency-based education on continuous entry programs at Wascana Institute?

You eliminated 300 student positions at Wascana this fall; you fired 39 instructors; you forced nine more to take early retirement. I ask you, Mr. Premier: how do you justify those cuts to nearly 2,500 young people who are on waiting lists at Wascana as a result of your policies?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, these . . . The member opposite would still be asking instructors to teach blacksmithing because he'd be afraid to change. We heard the very same arguments; we heard the very same arguments when they invented the sewing machine, Mr. Speaker. Women . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order. Order. Order. I ask all members in the House to please allow the Premier to answer the question.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, when I reminded the hon. member that we have built many new institutions and our budget for education is much larger than theirs, then he shifted to the question, well, we don't consult. Well where do you think the minister is today? Where was he? He was on the front page of the Ottawa Citizen last week, Mr. Speaker, consulting with people, faculties, people all across the country and all across the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So he can't . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I could ask the Minister of Education to give a report on the consultations and the meetings he's had, not only in Saskatchewan, not only with students, not only with institutions but right across Canada — right across the country. And that's what he's doing. So you can't get it on money spent on education; you can't get it on facilities; and you can't get it hiding behind the fact that you're afraid to change. Some instructors and some courses have to be adapted, but you won't admit that. You know that in your heart that it's true, but you stand there hypocritically and say, don't change this, don't change that.

It's the same position you've got on potash, the same position you've got on trade, the same position you've got on industrial development and diversification. You don't want to build, you don't want to build, you don't have the courage to build. You'll go and nationalize, you'll buy, you'll take over the whole world. And you'll stand up there and say, but don't change anything.

I'll tell you what you do. When you want to talk about education . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. The member for Saskatoon Fairview is now attempting to ask a question but is having difficulty.

Resignation of Chairman of Crown Management Board

Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Premier. On August 25 of this year an action was commenced in the Supreme Court of Alberta by the liquidation of the Canadian Commercial Bank, and the action was against a number of people for damages which approached \$300 million. One of the defendants is a Graham Walker, who I understand until recently was the chairman of the Crown Management Board, and who was a member of the board of directors of the potash corporation and Saskoil, and who resigned from the service of this government three days after that action was

commenced.

My question, Mr. Premier, is: when did you become aware that Mr. Walker was going to be, or was, a defendant in this action, and did this fact have anything to do with his sudden resignation which, as I say, took place three days after the action was commenced.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I was made aware of the event today, and I can say to the hon. member that Mr. Walker's move from the CMB (Crown Management Board of Saskatchewan) had nothing at all to do with this news that I had today.

And I can say, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Walker resigned on the board of directors of the financial institution in 1983, and it was doing quite fine at that time. He was appointed chairman of the board in 1985, CMB, I mean, long after that. And as you know yourself, being a legal professional, that in a shotgun approach where they're going after everybody, they'll pick any single individual that they can that has been associated with the financial institution, has been associated with in the past.

So Mr. Walker resigned as a board member a long time ago — 1983. He was appointed CMB chairman in 1985, and it's not connected in any fashion, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mitchell: — A new question to the Premier on the same subject, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Walker was, I think, the prime architect of your government's privatization strategies and was also a chief financial adviser to the government. Now, Mr. Premier, the allegations made in this statement of claim are quite serious. They're serious, particularly as regards the directors of the bank of which Mr. Walker was one for many years.

And my question to you is this: in light of this action, do you feel an obligation, or do you not feel an obligation, in the interests of Saskatchewan taxpayers to review the work of Mr. Walker while he's been in the employment of this government; to review the financial advice he's given; and to review the advice that he's given to you on the subject of privatization, having regard to these very, very serious allegations?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I can say without any hesitation that it's disappointing to listen to the opposition pick on Saskatchewan business men and women time and time and time again.

Graham Walker initiated a company in the province of Saskatchewan. It's now a national company, Pemberton Houston Willoughby — deserves credit, deserves credit for helping to build this institution locally as well as nationally. And they pick on him.

They pick on every single solitary business man. I hope you've the courage to say those kinds of things outside the House. All right, I mean, why are you against business men all the time? You're against business; you nationalize business. Do I have to go through the whole

rhetoric all the time about your attitude towards business? If you want to know our attitude towards people like Graham Walker, you could have attended the open for business conference in Saskatoon this weekend, which was world class.

We invite them here, we encourage them to invest and build, and you draw their names in front of the legislature like you're some sort of self-righteous saints against every single solitary individual that wants to build. Mr. Walker probably doesn't want to nationalize companies, he wants to build. And frankly, Mr. Speaker, I'll say finally that we design the policies here, whether it's public participation or privatization, and nobody else.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: — Supplementary. Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, you're not being fair. I didn't sue Mr. Walker. I didn't make any allegation against him in this House. I simply asked if you were . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order. Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order. I know I wasn't able to hear the member from Saskatoon Fairview. I'm not sure if the Premier was; maybe he's a little closer. But I think we should give the man an opportunity to ask the question so we can hear.

Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't sue Mr. Walker; I didn't make any allegations against him. I simply asked if you were going to review his decisions in light of the serious allegations made in this action.

Now I know he's a member of the board of directors of Saskoil, and I haven't seen any information as to his resignation from that board. Does he remain a member of the board of directors of Saskoil, and if so, are you expecting a resignation from that board?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly the hon. member is taking the allegations as true, and he's smearing the man's name all over. He's prejudging the whole issue, and it's not fair at all.

I mean, all he's trying to do is grandstand. He wants to be concerned about the law, about human rights, about respect for individuals, and he's standing there, I say, Mr. Speaker, quite hypocritical, and taking all these allegations as true, asking us to fire the individual, take him off the board. He's judging the man from his seat right now. That's not fair. It's not professional. It's highly political. It's very partisan. And frankly, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't belong in this Assembly, and the hon. member should know better.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Congratulations to Team Canada

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order, please. I think we should all calm down now. We've had an interesting question period where we've had a chance to perhaps let off a little steam, but I think now we should give the Premier an opportunity to make his ministerial statement.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Just a very brief statement. I'm sure all members will agree, and it is simply, Mr. Speaker, a congratulations to Team Canada last night for winning the Canada Cup.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — We know, Mr. Speaker, that the three-game final series between the two best teams in the world prove to be a display of some of the best hockey ever played in this country, or indeed across the globe. It was certainly reminiscent of the first real series between these two teams in 1972, and it will undoubtedly be one of the most . . . memories in the country's proud hockey history.

This was the fourth Canada Cup series, Mr. Speaker, and Canada has won three out of four. Because of the closeness of the match, it was indeed a sweet victory for all Canadians. The only Saskatchewan player on the team was Brian Propp, who was originally from Neudorf, Saskatchewan, and we congratulate him very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — The results of these efforts, Mr. Speaker, fill the sports pages throughout the country today and, indeed, the world. I can say when I was in New York talking at the potash meetings, the hockey game was on the televisions throughout the hotel, and in fact people in 16 to 18 different countries have watched this series.

It is a reminder to all of us of the all-out effort that produces the desired results — what a little competition can do and what a little professionalism can do. Mr. Speaker, people everywhere across Saskatchewan and across the country are a little bit prouder today of the fact that they are Canadians. Our hats are off to Team Canada. We congratulate you all.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with the Premier in extending our congratulations to Team Canada. Some may have noticed that I failed to attend the hearings . . . the proceedings of this House last night, and therefore caught the whole game. I thought the hockey was excellent, first class, obviously — world class. I thought Brad Park did an excellent job as a colour commentator and a somewhat better job than the Premier does as a colour commentator.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — And I thought on the whole, Mr. Speaker, it was an excellent, co-operative effort on the part of all the members of Team Canada who came

together in a co-operative spirit, working together, and spoke up for Canada and defeated the Soviet Union in three closely fought games: 5-6; 6-5; 6-5, as they say in tennis. And I know that we would all want to join with the Premier in congratulating Team Canada and congratulating Brian Propp, and I want to . . .

An Hon. Member: — Who were you cheering for?

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Oh, I was cheering for Brian Propp.

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

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I still prefer Brad Park.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Blakeney: — I want to say, Mr. Speaker, in closing, that I want to extend our particular congratulations to Brian Propp and the family of Brian Propp, the father of whom lives in the constituency of my colleague, the member for Regina North West, and we are very proud of Brian and all the members of Team Canada.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Business Opportunities Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House about a very successful event which was organized by the Government of Saskatchewan, Department of Tourism, Small Business and Co-operatives that occurred this past weekend in Saskatoon. It was the Business Opportunities Saskatchewan, a market-place which brought together companies from all across Canada who were interested in locating or expanding their businesses in the Saskatchewan market with people from Saskatchewan who are interested in investing in these business opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, Business Opportunities Saskatchewan was a success even before the doors opened. Exhibitor space was sold out well before the show, and in fact some original exhibitors were so successful that they sold all their opportunities in advance of the show.

But that's only the beginning of the success story, Mr. Speaker. We had 124 exhibitors at the market-place itself, offering a broad range of franchises, dealer distributors, retail and manufacturing opportunities. We had the participation of approximately 6,400 Saskatchewan people searching for the business opportunity that was right for them.

Exhibitor after exhibitor told us how impressed they were with the entrepreneurial spirit displayed by the people of Saskatchewan who visited their booth. They commented that the people who came to the show were not just passive lookers, but were seriously interested in pursuing and negotiating business opportunities.

But, Mr. Speaker, the real success of the market-place was in the business activity that occurred. I am happy to report that Saskatchewan will see immediate results in terms of both new businesses and expansion of existing businesses to include new product lines. We estimate that as many as 300 new businesses could be started in communities across Saskatchewan as a result of the show.

I want to congratulate the people of Saskatchewan for the entrepreneurial spirit they displayed. For it is that spirit, coupled with the new business enterprises, that will help build a stronger and a more diversified Saskatchewan economy.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would certainly hope that . . . in the minister's closing remarks, that he indicated that as many as 300 new businesses could be started in Saskatchewan as a result of the show. And I want to indicate that I certainly hope that that is the case. Given the fact of the number of small businesses that have gone bankrupt in Saskatchewan in the last two years, I think 300 wouldn't be enough to compensate for six months of the ones we've lost.

But, Mr. Speaker, the new Messiah seems to be tourism, and we welcome that because there has to be some kind of initiative. It's clear that their open-for-business philosophy flopped. And so we're waiting for something that this government will do for the business community of this province that will finally work.

The economic conditions that they've created in this province have not been conducive to new businesses opening, and I think that statistics in this province show that that is very clear. We are wanting to see in this province, a business climate where Saskatchewan people can invest and grow in their business lives in this province, as opposed to the kind of open for business that they've given us — the Pocklington's, the Weyerhaeuser's, the give-aways of Manalta Coal to an Alberta firm.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we're hoping that this Saskatchewan opportunities business conference will have been a success. The member from Saskatoon Centre was there. I was unable to attend this weekend because of other commitments. And we on this side of the House are certainly hoping that the 300 businesses you're promising us here today will, in fact, open in this province, but given your past record I'm hesitant to believe what you say. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

CONDOLENCES

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day, I rise to inform the Assembly of the passing away last night of Niles Buchanan, a former member of the Legislative Assembly for Notukeu-Willowbunch. I am told that the funeral has been scheduled for 2 p.m. on Monday, September 21, at

Helmsing's Funeral Home in Regina. And I understand that there will be an opportunity in a few days for the Assembly to express condolences in a more formal way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Mr. Shillington: — Thank you. Before orders of the day, I would like to lay on the Table a petition by 70 residents of Regina Centre — I would add for the benefit of the member from Melville, most of whom are employed — who urge the government, who urge the Saskatchewan Power Corporation not to discontinue Lorne and 4th Avenue drugs as a collection agent.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. speaker: — Order, please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lane that Bill No. 20 — **An Act to amend The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Solomon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 20, The Act to amend the Superannuation Act, is a Bill which has some attributes and some disadvantages from our point of view. And we see it as a Bill which provides many with an option for early retirement within the civil service. The program that was announced in March, I believe, was a program that was encouraging to many who wished to have early retirement as employees — long-term employees of the government.

One of the reasons I think this is an attribute is because our party has long supported programs which in effect provide individuals with an option to voluntarily retire at an early age. At first blush I think the second attribute, from the government's point of view, is that it reduces the number of employees that the government has on staff, and at first blush that's an attribute because it appears that it will save the government some money in terms of salaries and benefits from the day the retirement took place, forward.

The Bill does create a little bit of problems because it has some disadvantages, and some of the major disadvantages is that we do not know the cost of the Bill. We don't know whether it's going to be a direct cost to the treasury, whether the superannuation fund is in jeopardy of being expended far in advance of its projected expenditure date. We don't know whether it's going to cost the government and the taxpayers of this province 6 million, 8 million, 10 million or \$20 million a year or more. We just don't know that and we're hoping to get that information in committee.

The other disadvantage of the Bill is that for some

employees it was helpful because they wanted to retire, and offers that were made to individuals to retire under this plan were offers that were welcomed. However, some were strongly encouraged to take it with some suggestions that if they didn't take early retirement, they were to be terminated. And of course, what happened is, indeed, that some people that were eligible who opted not to take the retirement package because of many reasons, one of the reasons being they had other dependants, they were still quite happy with their job and wanted to work for the next 10 or 15 years before they reached the natural retirement age. They were, I think, at a disadvantage because of this Bill.

So the problem we have in that regard is that it was not a voluntary opportunity for many people but, in fact, for some it was a forced retirement. In that regard it was not a universal plan in the sense that it wasn't a longer term offer to employees who may be eligible not just in the month that it was offered, but perhaps throughout the calendar year. Also, it wasn't universal to all employees of the government which included Crown employees and in various agencies.

Another disadvantage which I see is that — and maybe it's more of a long-term thing, but certainly it has its immediate effects — and that is the fact that many employees who took early retirement were contributing a great deal to this province. They were employed in a number of provincial government departments which provided services which were very important.

For example, Consumer and Commercial Affairs witnessed 15 people retiring, and that's a bit of a concern because we've seen through the Principal Trust affair that there was not a lot of scrutiny on the government's part with regard to Principal Trust because many employees were being retired or terminated. And as a result, many people in this province were hurt who were not being retired under the superannuation plan.

Another major problem with regard to the civil service is that when you retire a fair chunk of experienced people, a fair number of experienced people, and well-educated people, not only do services become watered down and services become gutted, but in effect, services to the people that they were designed to help are not helping those people. For example, my colleague from Saskatoon in question period today talked about the cuts in education — 100 people were retired under that early retirement plan and we've lost a lot of professionals as a result . . .

An. Hon. Member: — Thirty-seven.

Mr. Solomon: — Thirty-seven were retired? I'm talking about education and continuing education and others. The figures I have here are 100, and that is a concern because we've lost a lot of professionals. If some of those professionals were being replaced by other professionals, we wouldn't see the destruction of some of the programs that were offered.

Another example, of course, is the Medical Care Insurance Commission where we've seen 15 people retire early. As a result of that kind of major reduction in

staff of experienced people, we see medicare being weakened as well. For example, doctors' and physicians' payments under the medicare scheme have been delayed to points where many doctors are being hurt as a result.

(1445)

So there's many concerns in the civil service with regard to that. And I would maintain that the programs such as health programs and education programs and other programs that were created to protect citizens of this province may be weakened and cut back as a result of these early retirements.

The other problem I see is that when people take early retirement they are subjected to making decisions about whether they stay in the province and whether they leave the province. If we have a large number of people retiring at any particular time in this province, many people leave the province and as a result of that, businesses lose potential and existing customers. So that the money that is spent on the pensions and the money, the consumer dollars that are spent in the economy by the pensioners, go to other jurisdictions in Canada and outside of Canada. That of course has a very modest effect, but it does have a modest negative effect in terms of businesses in this province and therefore our economy.

So as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, I will look forward to the questioning in committee as we get to it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, I don't intend to add to the comments made by the member for Regina North West, and put as articulately as they are.

I simply want to echo the concern that the changes which are being made are, I think, relatively expensive. I think they're not being funded out of current revenues but the pension fund is being raided for it.

I simply want to warn the minister that when this reaches committee of the whole, we're going to want to know the cost of this. I put him on warning now that he should come with that information. It's information we are entitled to and the public should have before this Bill is passed.

So I simply rise in my place to warn him these questions will be asked, and I would like to have the information here.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to prolong this debate. I agree with everything that my two colleagues have said before me. I want to make one other point here for the record in that, although I think it is fair that people who take early retirement should be provided the appropriate kind of benefits, it is widely and clearly known throughout this province that the methods that were employed by this government in causing people to take early retirement were somewhat less than appropriate.

Now there are countless numbers of people who have taken early retirement not because they thought that they

wanted to — although there are some who welcomed it — but many hundreds who took early retirement because the government representatives made it very clear to them that either they take early retirement or they may end up not having a job down the road at some point in time.

And I personally, Mr. Speaker, as I know many others, object to that kind of threatening approach by any government. In fact I object to that kind of approach by any employer. But I think it's particularly bad when a government in whom the public has put its trust treats its employees who have provided many years of service in that kind of manner. I wanted to put that on the record, Mr. Speaker.

I know that there are many people out there who wish they could put it on the record. But like many other citizens in Saskatchewan these days, they don't have a voice; they don't have a voice except the one that's provided through them by the opposition in this House, because the government is not giving them the opportunity to speak to them, and is not giving them the opportunity to be able to voice their concerns. Because as the Premier has shown, and as the members of the treasury board have shown, they have busily barricaded themselves away behind security systems, multitudes of security systems, and other kinds of insulation's so that the people can no longer get to them.

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

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lane that Bill No. 14 — **An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Superannuation Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. I'm just going to address a very few words on this. Others of my caucus want to make some comments as well. I indicated when this matter was dealt with, it must be close to a month ago now, that I had concerns about this Bill. It gave the management of SaskTel an unrestricted discretion to terminate the services of employees without reference to collective bargaining agreements, without reference to the normal rights which are considered to be attached to any employment that a person has.

This Bill appears to cut through the collective bargaining agreement the rights which the courts have developed for employees, to give them no rights at all except what the government gives them.

In the month I've had to look at, my concerns have not been mollified at all. I had brought to my attention a copy of the Sask Power Bill. The provisions in Sask Power looked at one point in time to be similar. I see now it is not. It is very different. The provision in the Sask Power Bill provides that where a person is unable, for physical reasons to perform his employment, that he may be terminated. This just says . . . this contains no such qualification. Management could presumably terminate him because they didn't like the hang of his clothes.

Given the record of the management over there and their constant ongoing warfare with their employees, I have very, very grave concerns about this. I don't want to prolong it, Mr. Speaker, I do ask the minister in closing to deal with this question of why he felt it was necessary to have such an unrestricted power.

There would have been a time, Mr. Speaker, when I wouldn't have been as concerned about this. For decades the relationship between the employees of SaskTel and the management of SaskTel was as good as any in the country. I would go through my constituency time after time. I would meet employees from SaskTel. They were happy working with SaskTel. The moral was good. They wanted to stay at SaskTel, and most of them planned to spend their whole working life at SaskTel.

In the last couple of years that has changed entirely. The morale is terrible. There is constant bickering. The management are intent, for whatever reason, in weeding out many of the able people, promoting some of those who aren't, and that company has some very serious employee problems. And that, Mr. Speaker, became apparent when there was a strike there this spring. There have been very, very few strikes in telephone companies in Canada. I'm told there have only been three or four. It is most unusual.

It came about not because they were . . . I think not just because they were concerned about the issues which were on the bargaining table, but because the employee morale over there is just awful. That comes about because of the way, largely because of the way management has approached them. I don't trust management at SaskTel with these broad, sweeping powers; I know full well the employees don't, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we're as concerned about it. With that I take my chair, and I ask the minister to deal with these questions when he closes debate.

Mr. Solomon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to speak on this Bill 14 as well, An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Superannuation Act. I have in the constituency of Regina North West, Mr. Speaker, somewhere in the vicinity of about 300 families who are employed by SaskTel. I have found, having visited many of them on the doorsteps, during the calendar year 1986 and a few of them since '86, that the employees at SaskTel are absolutely different from when I used to work at the corporation.

I used to be employed at that corporation back in 1979, and at that time the morale, Mr. Speaker, was good. People were proud of the corporation. They got along well with management. There were never any labour disputes, were not any labour disputes from the early '50s, I believe, right through until this government got elected. And they were very happy with the type of work that they did and they were very happy with the type of distant governing that the governments of the day, including on Ross Thatcher's government, were involved with respect to the corporation.

What has happened since with many of these employees, and almost all of them that I spoke with is that (a) they are absolutely different in terms of their morale; the feel that

going to work is a real chore; they feel they don't know what's going to happen at work from day to day because there's a lack of leadership and certainly there's a great deal of fear because of what the government of the day has done regarding SaskTel. They've made an effort to really weaken the corporation. There's been rumours about privatizing it and so on.

But what this Bill does, Mr. Speaker — and I guess I'm getting to the point of the Bill, and my position with regard to the debate is that it has some shortcomings. As my colleague from Regina Centre indicated and I concur with, this amendment really cuts into the collective bargaining process and it's another heavy-handed government move to make arbitrary decisions with respect to Crown corporations.

Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, have always operated with a fair amount of autonomy. They've had separate wage scales, separate merit packages, separate personnel departments, and were tied in through the minister — a couple ministers being involved with the board — so that they could be tied into the government of the day.

And this is another example, Mr. Speaker, in my view, of the government of the day — this so-called Conservative government — wearing their jackboots into the Crown corporations and telling people what to do when they're ignorant of the objectives and the mission of the corporation. And in my view, Mr. Speaker, I find that quite distasteful.

So I must rise in this debate and voice my support for the employees of SaskTel, both within the union and out of scope, and certainly join with my colleagues in taking a position against this amendment. Thank you.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too feel compelled to join the debate on this Bill. I think it's an unfair piece of legislation. I think it shows no respect for the professionalism that the civil servants of this province have shown. I think it also sets a situation where there will be no future for anyone in a Crown corporation. If this carries on throughout the rest of the government departments and through the Crown corporations there will be no future for a new employee joining this Crown corporation especially, because there won't be any long-term future. Not that people that are employed under a Crown corporation expect to start there when they're 18 and retire whenever the times does come, the age of retirement. I don't believe that to be the case. I think a lot of employees move on. They like new challenges.

But I think what we're doing is creating a situation where management can arbitrarily unload any employee for whatever particular reason. I think it's a very unhealthy piece of legislation. I wonder, should there not be some input from the employees themselves as to whether or not they would like to take an early retirement package. I don't see that as being part of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to suggest today that what this government is doing is setting up SaskTel for privatization. I believe this government's motives are to get rid of as many employees to allow — if it's an outright

sale of this corporation — to allow for new management to bring in their own people and at the expense of those who have served SaskTel very faithfully for many, many years. And I want to look for a moment, if we can, at what these employees have helped to create with SaskTel.

(1500)

In 1986 this corporation netted a profit of some \$35.6 million. In the last three years, even under this administration with the record of losing money through Crown corporations that they have, that corporation has delivered over \$109 million to the provincial coffers.

The people in Saskatchewan are blessed with the lowest telephone rates in Canada. The rates have been stable, and rates that I think the people who work in the corporation should be very proud of being able to deliver to the people of this province. I say the rates have been stable, Mr. Speaker, with the exception of one area — and it's bothered me for a long time — I speak of the increase of about 150 per cent to the pay phones. And to me what it does is it shows a lack of caring for a lot of young people in this province. I guess I would want to just relate the kid that would go to the corner store and want to phone home to mom. Can't carry a dime any more; that little person now carries a quarter; or in 40 below in southern Saskatchewan, the kid that phones home from the skating rink because there's a blizzard outside and says, mom, I need a ride home. He can't do it with a dime any more; he's got to pay a quarter.

I say, Mr. Speaker, this is a slap in the face of the government employees, the people that work for SaskTel. I think it's unfair, and it's the kind of legislation that I think the people of this province can well do without. The number of people whose lives have been affected adversely by the actions of this government are growing and growing and growing, and I fear, Mr. Speaker, that this is just another move to hammer the people, the working people of this province.

And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I cannot for any reason support this legislation.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will join my colleagues, the member for Regina Centre who spoke earlier on this Bill, and my colleague from Prince Albert-Duck Lake in opposing the Bill, Bill 14, which is proposed.

The essence of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, is to give the corporation, SaskTel, the power to retire any employee, at the option of the corporation, any employee who has served 15 years continuously.

Now it gives it quite arbitrary power, and that is the substance that needs to be opposed in this respect. It needs to be opposed on behalf of the workers themselves who will be affected, Mr. Speaker, and needs to be opposed on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan because it will . . . I believe it to be a preliminary step to be setting up for the sale of this corporation, as my colleague from Prince Albert-Duck Lake has mentioned.

Now I think if the members opposite, and if the minister

had checked it out with the workers, he would have received the answers, the answer that they fear the writing of the way the legislation is worded. Because what it does is it gives the corporation the complete option, without necessarily having to consult, the option of retiring any employee who's been in there for 16 years and up.

Anybody that's been employed 12, 13, 14 years will look to this legislation as being threatening, because once they received their 15th year of service, they can then be very easily faced with an ultimatum, an ultimatum of: you retire, or we may find other ways of getting rid of you. And that would be based on their experience of having experienced sort of a climate of fear in the corporations over the last several years.

Now this can happen; the type of decision to force somebody into an early retirement could happen, Mr. Speaker, due to political reasons, or it also could happen due to personality conflicts. And it is my strong feeling that any type of legislation of this type should have mutual agreement for any type of early retirement. After 15 years it may be quite wise for some people to retire, but they should only be able to do it with mutual agreement.

So I'm saying that this Bill does not exactly give somebody ironclad job security. As a matter of fact, it makes them about as secure as a tired flag-pole sitter on a windy day, Mr. Speaker.

I mentioned earlier that I believe that this is a preliminary step in setting this corporation up for sale. As my colleague from Prince Albert-Duck Lake mentioned, it would be very easy now for anybody in management to unload personnel that they might not want, or personnel in senior positions, on behalf of a prospective buyer or on behalf of the corporation itself.

I oppose the setting up of this Crown for sale, because I believe that it had done a very successful job for the people of Saskatchewan. And we've seen what happens when a corporation like this is privatized. There's the British experience that I can point towards, and the press has carried several articles of what's happened in Great Britain when they privatized the British telecom service. The net experience of the people of Great Britain has been that the costs certainly have not gone down, and the service has deteriorated.

Now I talk about this as a possibility because there are other things that are happening in the corporation right now, Mr. Speaker, that make it look like it's being set up ultimately for sale. The corporation is now being divided internally into two corporations or two organizations, one which is known as the seven-up group and the other is known as the six-and-under.

This seven-up group which is also called NEWCO 2, new company 2, is the group which is now being given the responsibility for handling all of those services to customers who have seven phones or more installed, and this includes all of those companies which have put in . . . companies with major networks, major telephone networks like Sask Power or the credit union and Social Services, those which are the most lucrative and those

whose money can be used to help and put in the individual telephones that are now being put into rural Saskatchewan and to reach into the distant and more remote areas in Saskatchewan.

So I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, that this corporation, which appears to be being set up for sale, really doesn't need for kind of fixing. As a matter of fact, it's working so well and I hate to see it be subject to some cockamammy or cock-eyed, impractical doctrinaire idea that it should be privatized or set up for sale. It seems that any time the government opposite has latched on to a program that was set up by the NDP and it's actually working it, that they want to set it up and scuttle it.

So, Mr. Speaker, for those two reasons, for the reasons that the workers . . . the effect it's going to have on the workers, that they will not have the right of mutual agreement before retirement, and also because I believe it's being set up for sale, I will be opposing this Bill.

Ms. Smart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to oppose this amendment to the Bill. Particularly because of my interest and my connection with a whole group of workers in the SaskTel corporation that are mainly women, who work in what is basically the ghetto-ized area of work, and I'm talking particularly about the telephone operators.

I got to know many of them when I belonged to a group of women called women concerned about technology, looking at the implication of the implementation of the high-tech industry into SaskTel. And I discovered in the course of my friendship with these many women, the amount of stress and the amount of change that they were experiencing in their work place as their work place became computerized.

And it's one reason why I am very concerned about the unthinking boosterism of high tech that this government is all about. Because high tech must be put in carefully and with a very human base to it where people are the focus of attention and concern, so that they don't become smashed by the way in which this new technology can operation. And when I see a section of a Bill that says:

Where the corporation is of the opinion that an employee is not able to meet the requirements of his employment (and I assume that means her employment as well) and the employee has served (for) at least 15 years continuously . . . the employee may be retired at the option of the corporation . . .

Those are very ominous words to many women who are working as telephone operators, I'm sure, because what it means is that the corporation is going to define how they will be employed and what stress they can work under and what work-load they will carry. And if they can't do it, and if they burn out as many of them are doing, they will be out on their retirement . . . early retirement and out on the streets looking for other work.

And I have in Saskatoon Centre some many women, as I've said in this House before, who have been forced out of their work place by high tech, women who are 30, 40,

50, 60 years old, not yet to retirement by any means in terms of their pension plans from CPP or the old age pension, but women who no longer have any work.

If you take a woman who's been hired on as a telephone operator at the age of 20, she can be retired at 35. She can be burned out by the demand from the corporation that she handle many, many calls, one after the other, within a certain amount of time. And if the stress of that work-load does her in, too bad. With this kind of legislation it's the law that she's out. And there she is, looking for other work.

There's no voluntary requirement here for her to be able to say that she wants to stay on in the work. The corporation makes all the decisions. It's not negotiated in a contract. And once they're out, even if they're members of the union, I am afraid, and I'm deeply concerned, that there will be very little protection for them in grieving a forced retirement.

I speak passionately about what's happening to women because women are being abused by this government in so many ways: through the failure of the education system to continue to support the programs that they need to get the training; through the way in which they've been tossed out of work by dismantling of the dental plan, and we've listed many of those examples in this House.

And here's another possible and very likely attack on a group of people who are doing a super job, and yet the stress and the level of the work-load that's put on them is increasing and increasing. And everything that they do now as telephone operators is monitored, and if they can't keep up to the pace of dealing with the calls as they come in and giving the information out, they are going to be considered by the corporation to be redundant.

Now what can they do then when they're out of work? And I would like to speak briefly about this because it is another example of why I feel we must defend these work places for women with every ounce of strength that we have, because this kind of work has been important to women for a long time, and it's not good enough to say that people like that can work for 15 years and be out on their ear.

I went to the small business fair that we heard the Minister of Tourism and Small Business boast about just a few minutes ago in the House. And one of the businesses that's going to be available for people to buy a franchise for here in the province of Saskatchewan, and actually it's a business that's already in Saskatchewan, is something called Molly Maid and another business called MiniMaid. And these two franchises provide opportunities for women to be able to go out and clean other people's toilet bowls under a franchised arrangement on minimum wage.

And I spoke to the people who were promoting these two businesses, as one of the two businesses that this government wants to boast about bringing into the province, and I heard they say things like this: a good franchise. One of them costs \$16,900, the other costs \$11,000 to buy into it. Good franchise for working women because they can work those businesses out of

their own homes and they can look after their children at the same time. Great opportunities for women to do that kind of work if they've got the \$16,900 to buy the franchise to start with. They become the boss. And what they were saying was: it's good to be your own boss, it's good to make your own decisions, and it's good to have employees under you.

And I say the employees under them will be the kinds of people that are put out of work by this kind of legislation in regular work places like SaskTel, putting people out to the fringe of the employment world where they get picked up by people who want to operate these kinds of, I say, immoral franchises, frankly, because what they were talking about was the fact that the employees that they can get to do that kind of work — the Molly Maid and MiniMaid — are the single parents of this province who are desperate for work, who are often uneducated, and who can pick up that kind of work.

(1515)

And they also mentioned the people who were put out of work early by their other employment opportunities and are not considered able to be retrained because the courses cost too much for them to get into, and they very often have very little savings.

And it made me very angry, frankly, that this is the kind of promotion of job opportunities that this government is putting forward to the people of Saskatchewan, because on the one hand you have women saying: it's nice to stay home and look after our children, then we can own this franchise and do this work, and we can employ single parents who have no child care for their children to go out for 40 and 50 hours a week to clean other people's toilet bowls.

And one of the worst things about this kind of franchise is that it's all done on commission work, so you don't even get a regular wage. You get paid by the job that you do, and you get incentives. And some of the incentives that they're promoting are that the owners of the franchises buy special gifts that people could not afford or would not buy out of their own salary or their own wages and make those the incentive for a month's work cleaning toilets and cleaning bathrooms and cleaning kitchens.

And they said, and I heard them say to me, as one of the promotions of this franchise: you hold this gift up to the women, and they will work hard for it because it's something that they will not be able to get out of their salary, and also if you just gave them money for doing a good job they would go and buy food and other things that the need, and that's not what we want them to do; we want them to work hard for a pittance, and then they can get some vase or something that the franchisee has been able to buy wholesale, cheap, and offer to them as a great gift, which if they had to pay retail for would be completely out of sight and probably useless.

And as I say, I'm extremely angry when I see this sort of thing happening in this province. I think it's immoral; I think it's wrong. I think we've got to do a lot better in terms of employment for our people. I think it's very important that we preserve the SaskTel corporation, and

that sections and amendments like these not be brought in.

An Hon. Member: — Who won the hockey game last night, Annie? Who won the hockey game?

Ms. Smart: — I know perfectly well who won . . . Lookit! I'm talking about something as serious as women's employment and the kinds of concerns that people are up against, and those boys over there want to know what the score was on the hockey game. That's their priority. That's their priority. As they go about the business . . . And that was the Minister of Health who said that, the one that destroyed the dental plan, the one that has been causing those waiting lists in the hospitals and all the other stressful things. It's all a big joke to that government opposite. It is not a joke to me.

I'm standing in support of the workers. I oppose this amendment to the Bill very strongly, and on behalf of, particularly, the telephone operators, I think this is dreadful legislation. It's just the sort of thing to expect from the government opposite, but I assure you it is not at all good for the workers, and I am totally opposed to it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on this Bill that in our estimation will do harm to the working people of this province. And like my colleague from Saskatoon Centre who spoke just before me, I too stand with the working people of the province in this matter.

And while I'm on my feet . . . And first of all, before I speak of this, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to raise the question of the belittling of the comments made by my colleague from Saskatoon Centre by the Minister of Health and other members of the Assembly. And it shows the kind of attitude of belittling of women's concerns.

My colleague from Saskatoon Centre has raised concerns which concern working women and working men in this province. The members opposite have belittled those concerns. And they will pay for that come election time. And they can sit there and belittle those types of concerns all they want, but when the day of reckoning comes three or four years down the road, we will see who belittles whom. Because the working men and working women of this province will be belittling their efforts, because they know that the efforts they have carried forth on behalf of them deserve to be belittled because they are little, little indeed.

And it's part of the kind of sexist attitude which pervades in this society, that whenever women speak out on issues, those who don't agree with those issues or those who don't understand those issues tend to belittle them. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that those of us on this side of the House do not take kindly to having concerns, concerns which directly affect working men and working women, whether they're working in the home or whether they're working outside the home, we don't think that it's in the best interests of the citizens of Saskatchewan to belittle those concerns, despite the fact that the member

for Meadow Lake, the Minister of Health, may think so.

However, Mr. Speaker, turning to the topic at hand, which is Bill No. 14, An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Superannuation Act, I'd like to say first of all that I have a great many families who work at Saskatchewan Telecommunications who live in the constituency of Regina Rosemont and who have contacted me personally in order to encourage me to speak on this subject.

They have concerns as family members and as working people in Regina, and I'm sure that their colleagues throughout the province have the similar concerns as to the intent and as to the actual effect of this Bill.

And there is a great deal of fear in this province as to the intent of this Bill. There is a great deal of fear among Saskatchewan Telecommunications employees as to the intent. Because they look back at the record of this government and the kind of treatment that they have had at the hands of this government, and they can see no good in this Bill whatsoever. They can see no good because the Bill is worded in such a manner that the prince of darkness, those who are in charge of SaskTel, can instruct the managers of SaskTel to carry out the kinds of reigns of terror that we've seen carried out, for example, in Saskatchewan Power Corporation in which people are summarily dismissed from their jobs, summarily dismissed from the post that they have worked at for 10 or 15 or 20 years and provided good service to the people of this province. And they feel that that kind of summary, occupational execution, if you like, will be visited upon them, and that this Bill provides the door through which the executioner, the prince of darkness, the member of Qu'Appelle-Lumsden, will walk.

And we have . . . Mr. Speaker, that may seem like high-flown hyperbole, but I tell you, the kind of fear and the kind of reaction to this Bill is surprising — because I want to make something clear, Mr. Speaker.

We on this side do not oppose the concept of voluntary early retirement. We think, in fact, that there is a great benefit, that there is a great benefit, in fact, to lowering the retirement age to 55, provided that the retirees receive full pension benefits and receive the kind of benefits that people need after working for an institution for 25 or 30 and 35 years.

And we think . . . so we're not opposed by any means in principle to the concept of lowering the retirement age. And we're not opposed to the principle of lowering the retirement age below the age of 55 if it's necessary for people who have received some kind of physical incapacitation, whether through a progressive disease or whether through some other form of incapacitation. We think that the flexibility should be there in all enterprises, Crown corporations or private enterprises or whatever — that, in fact, that kind of . . . that employees receive that kind of a treatment on an ongoing basis and have the availability to be treated in that flexible manner where, in fact, if they're not able to perform their functions through some kind of physical incapacitation or mental incapacitation, that in fact they're able to live at a decent

standard of living.

So I want to make that clear, that we on this side of the House do not oppose early retirement and do not oppose those kinds of early retirement efforts. We don't oppose it for another very practical reason.

We feel that early retirement may, in fact, help act as a method in which younger people, who are presently out of work, can enter into the work-force. And we think that given the situation in Saskatchewan where we find a whole generation which is becoming a lost generation leaving this province, we find, in fact, that the lowering of the retirement age may be a very practical and realistic method in order to maintain Saskatchewan young people here in Saskatchewan.

So it's not a question of fearing change, or it's not a question of being against lowering the retirement age, or it's not any of those kind of questions that we raise this. It's a question to what intent the Bill is being used for, and what will be the effect, and what will be the effect.

And that is . . . underlies all the comments of the members of this side of the House in regards to this Bill. And it's reduced itself to a very, very short phrase. It's a very short phrase that the member from Quill Lake just brings to me now: can the workers of this province trust this government? That's what this Bill reduces itself to. And I ask the members on this side of the House that question — to think about that. Can the working people of this province trust that government? And the answer, Mr. Speaker, is no. And the answer, Mr. Speaker, is no. And it's now just no on my say so, and it's not just no because I stand in political opposition to the members of the other side.

It's their record, Mr. Speaker, it's their record, and it's a record of one which leaves working people to quake, quaking in their boots at the actions of this government — quaking in their boots whether they work at a potash mine, or whether they work at Sask Power, or whether they work at a coal-mine, or wherever they're working in the province. They've seen the record of treatment that working people have received at the hands of this government, and they have very, very good reasons to be afraid.

And I'd like to refer to a letter, Mr. Speaker, that we have received from the representatives of the people who work in Saskatchewan Telecommunications in regards to that Bill, and it'll back up what I'm saying in terms of the kind of fear and the kind of trepidation that working people feel that this Bill may impact on their lives.

And this letter . . . and it's from Mr. Jeff Smith, and he's the national representative of the communication workers of Canada, from their western region office, and I emphasize that — western region office — which is located at 2629 - 29th Avenue, Suite 102, in Regina, Saskatchewan. We're not talking about some big eastern union boss here; we're talking about Mr. Jeff Smith who lives and works here in Regina, right? — downtown Regina; someone who has had firsthand, a good glimpse at the political record of this government.

And Mr. Smith writes in the letter to our caucus, and he asks us, first of all, he says:

Who Requested the Amendments?

There's the question of who requested these amendments.

Contrary to the minister's response (that is contrary to the response to the member from Qu'Appelle-Lumsden, contrary to what he said, what he has been quoted as saying in the newspapers), the Union does not recall (that is the SaskTel workers there and their collective organization) does not recall the specific amendments requested by the Government.

And they go on to say:

We have made comments in the past concerning the Retirement Age be reduced to Age 55 and make the requirements universal that the employees could request as the employer could (request that type of early) retirement.

So the people who work at SaskTel say that they didn't request this amendment; they did not request this amendment, contrary to what the minister said.

And then they go to ask:

Why the Specific Wording Change?

Why, specifically, was this wording change introduced?

Specifically the deletion of (and in the Bill it says) "is not physically or otherwise qualified," . . .

The deletion of that phrase . . . and here I'm going to quote the words of Mr. Jeff Smith who lives in Regina. Mr. Smith said the deletion of that phrase:

. . . conjures up fears (conjures up fears) . . . the employee could be requested to retire for a myriad of reasons . . .

Political reasons, reasons due to technological change, and other reasons. And it's interesting to see that the very first word that Mr. Smith mentions in this is political reasons.

(1530)

Here we have the workers at SaskTel, who've had experience with this government, saying, we fear that we're going to be asked to give up our jobs for political reasons. And the political reasons are obvious, Mr. Speaker. They're the political reasons that everybody in Saskatchewan knows. The political reasons relate to the whole concept of the introduction of patronage which has become rampant and ripe in the upper levels of Saskatchewan Tel, as it has through all the Crown corporations — political reasons to fire people from their jobs.

And the workers at SaskTel fear — they fear the minister in

charge of SaskTel; they fear the member for Qu'Appelle-Lumsden. And we don't think that that's a good situation, Mr. Speaker, to have in our province where working people have to fear their elected representatives, have to fear the government. But here it is in black and white. They don't want the legislation in here because they fear they're going to get fired for political reasons.

They go on to say, in regards to the specific word changes of the Bill, why delete section 16(3). And that section, 16(3), I say to the people of the province, is:

No yearly allowance payable under this section shall be less than \$360.

And the letter goes on to say:

Although the Company has stated that this has become superfluous. We say why not leave it in that it still (maintains) a minimum benchmark.

I think that's a good point, Mr. Speaker. I think that's a good point. If I were to introduce amendments, however, I think I would raise that minimum bench-mark beyond the \$360 a year.

And I wonder from the minister whether he'd be, in fact, willing or not to entertain an amendment to that matter; that we could raise that minimum bench-mark up to a number, say, \$3,000 a year as a minimum bench-mark which a retiree would receive. And that if, in fact, the removal of that bench-mark is to make sure . . . if as the government says it's superfluous, why not, in fact, introduce a bench-mark which is not superfluous, and which would guarantee retirees, and which would come to put to rest some of the fears that working people in SaskTel feel.

The letter finishes, Mr. Speaker, as I shall finish. Mr. Smith says:

We had left these questions with the Company at a meeting on July 21 where they stated that, "the answers will be forthcoming" and since we haven't heard from them, we would appreciate these questions being asked in the House.

And that's why I've read the letter today, Mr. Speaker, is I want to put the questions to the minister in charge of Saskatchewan telephones; to have him on his feet; to try to get him to directly deal with these questions raised by the workers at SaskTel, so that he can either confirm their worst fears that what this Bill is, is nothing more than a method of opening SaskTel to the hatchet of the "prince of darkness", or whether in fact it actually does deal with the planned reorganizations of SaskTel and will allow the kind of humane and decent treatment to SaskTel workers that I know that all members, at least on this side of the House, want to see happen. So I lay these questions before the House and before the minister, Mr. Speaker, and in doing so I will finish my address on second reading of this Bill.

Mr. Calvert: Mr. Speaker, I too am happy to enter this debate around Bill 14, a Bill that proposes to amend The

Saskatchewan Telecommunications Superannuation Act. Mr. Speaker, as this Bill has been presented to this House, I see it as a rather imprecise Bill and, indeed, a potentially dangerous Bill. And since the Bill was first introduced to the House, I have received a number of concerns from constituents of mine, and I do feel it my responsibility to relate those concerns to this Assembly before we act on this Bill.

I have in my constituency, as many members do - perhaps all members - men and women who are at work in the field of telecommunications who have chosen that field, many of them young men and women, Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of them who would wish to pursue a lifetime career in telecommunications, and in this province, essentially, that means with SaskTel.

And they are looking at this piece of legislation, and what it says to them is that after only 15 years of service with the corporation, after only 15 years, at the option of the management of SaskTel, at the option of the corporation, at the whim of the corporation, they can see their career with SaskTel effectively ended. And that's got them concerned, and understandably so.

Mr. Speaker, for the sake of illustration - if this legislation is to pass, and pass unamended - for the sake of illustration let's just say that someone began work with SaskTel at the age of 20 years, at the age of 20. That means at the age of 35 years, 35 years old, just when that individual may have a spouse, children, family, a mortgage - just at that point in his or her life, at the whim of SaskTel, that individual could be retired. Their career with SaskTel is effectively ended, and of course the retirement benefits are going to be pretty low at that point. And so I understand why these individuals are concerned about this legislation, for some individuals at age 35 could be retired at the whim of SaskTel.

Mr. Speaker, we could take another example - the individual, let's say, who is now 50 or 55 years of age who perhaps has already given 20, 25 years of service to the people of Saskatchewan through SaskTel. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're now looking forward to retirement, but they know for retirement security they will need to work another number of years. They know it is impossible perhaps for them to, at age 55, to go out and start a new career and find a new job. They know it may be impossible financially to survive. And so at age 50 or 55, at the whim of SaskTel, they can be retired.

And so it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, it's not much wonder that people are concerned about this legislation which clearly provides to SaskTel all of the options for early retirement, and that's the nub of the concern. The nub of the concern is that this legislation puts all of the choice in terms of early retirement in the hands of the corporation. It's just as clear as clear can be.

Let me just read a part of the Bill. The substantive amendment says the new Bill would read:

Where the corporation is of the opinion that an employee is not able to meet the requirements of his employment and the employee has served at least 15 years continuously with the corporation,

the employee may be retired at the option of the corporation . . .

All of the options then belong with SaskTel. Now what is so imprecise in this legislation, Mr. Speaker, is the grounds upon which the corporation may exercise this option. All that this legislation says is: where, in the opinion of the corporation, an employee is no longer able to meet the requirements of the work, that employee can be retired.

Now that's a pretty significant change from the current provision which exists in legislation. Currently, Mr. Speaker, for SaskTel to enforce an early retirement, the corporation must prove any employee is either physically or otherwise unqualified to do his or her work. And on those crucial words, "physically or otherwise", decisions can be made and decisions can be disputed.

In this new legislation, if it passes unamended, then the definitive phrase, physically or otherwise, is removed, and it's being replaced by much more imprecise language. All it will say is that if an employee is not able to meet the requirements of the work, in the opinion of SaskTel.

So then if the legislation passes unamended, any employee whom SaskTel determines to be no longer able to meet their requirements can be retired, and that employee, it seems to me, then will have very little recourse to dispute the decision. So I ask: is it any wonder that employees in SaskTel are concerned?

It seems to be, Mr. Speaker, that as legislators it's incumbent upon us to ask ourselves, why - then why is this Bill proposed? What indeed is it attempting to accomplish? If we are to be responsible to our position in this legislature, we need to be asking that question on behalf of SaskTel workers, on behalf of all public employees, indeed on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, because this is not just a bit of housekeeping. We are here debating the future of individuals and families in this province. And we need to ask ourselves: is it good legislation for them, or is it bad?

I would suggest there are two scenarios, Mr. Speaker, to explain the reasoning for this Bill - one of them an appealing scenario, and one of them a frightening scenario.

The first scenario would be as the minister paints it. The minister responsible for SaskTel has suggested publicly, and in this House, that in fact the legislation has come at the request of SaskTel people in order to provide for them a broader option in terms of retirement. And indeed, for a whole variety of reasons, there may be those who would appreciate an option for early retirement, and I think all members in this House could be unanimous in supporting that desire and direction. If this scenario be the case, if it is indeed to broaden the options for the workers at SaskTel, and I sincerely hope it is, then all this Bill simply needs is a little cleaning up - some amending, perhaps a withdrawal and redrafting, but some simple cleaning up.

If indeed we desire to widen the scope of retirement possibilities in SaskTel, then clearly it seems to me the

provisions of this Bill ought to permit the option of early retirement to both the employer and the employee. Surely the Bill ought to be written to enable both the employee to request retirement, and the employer to suggest retirement, in those situations where an early retirement might be mutually desirable. Surely if that's the intent of the Bill - and I sincerely hope it is - then the Bill should say so.

If it is then the goal of the government to broaden retirement possibilities for SaskTel workers, then I suggest that that can be accomplished through relatively simple amendments to the wording. And if in fact it is the government's goal, then I would suggest when and if amendments are proposed, that all members and members opposite will support those amendments.

But, Mr. Speaker, if in fact amendments are proposed to strengthen this Bill and we find members opposite voting against those amendments, then the conclusion must be, there must be another goal for this legislation - another agenda that's attached to what's happening here.

And so that brings me to what has been suggested as the second scenario or the second agenda, as why we are looking at this piece of legislation. And if that second agenda be true, then it ought to concern every employee in SaskTel. It ought to concern every employee of a Crown corporation in this province, every public employee. It ought to concern every thinking person in the province.

If this Bill passes unamended, it places in the hands of this corporation the entire power to determine an employee's future. And I don't think I need to remind members that this particular corporation acts as the direction and at the will of the government of the day. And so it's not hard, Mr. Speaker, to imagine some possible scenarios and implications of this Bill, if passed unamended.

For instance, if a SaskTel employee dares to express a political viewpoint that differs from the government of the day, it's not unreasonable to suggest that that same employee will soon, in the opinion of the corporation, no longer meet the requirements of his or her work, and will be summoned to a manager's office and informed of an early retirement package.

Or if an employee of SaskTel dare question a management decision, or if an employee of the corporation would dare suggest or criticize some management decision or suggest some new direction, or if that employee would stand up to the right of his fellow employees, it's not unreasonable to suggest that that same employee might soon, in the opinion of the corporation, no longer meet the requirements of his or her position, and find on his or her desk a summons or a notice in regard to early retirement.

(1545)

That this possibility is left open in the Bill as it's now worded ought to concern every employee of SaskTel, every public servant in Saskatchewan - indeed, every thinking person.

Mr. Speaker, many of the SaskTel people that I've spoken with, in my own constituency and elsewhere, many others who are of the employ in this government, and indeed, people that I've spoken with who have no relationship to government at all, when I speak to them about the provisions of this Bill, they express concern.

I think those concerns and those fears can easily be put to rest if in committee we can have some unanimous acceptance in this House of construction amendments - amendments that make it possible for both the corporation to suggest retirement or for employees to request that early retirement. Those kind of amendments can turn the Bill around to make it, I think, into a very positive and progressive piece of legislation.

But, if we pass it without amendment, then it's my position we're putting into place a law which is very negative, very dangerous, and a very regressive piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we on this side of the House want to see something good come of this. I certainly want it to be one of the few things we have done in this sitting that we all could look back on with some satisfaction and pride, knowing that we have done with a clear conscience something that will safeguard justice and improve the quality of life for the people we've been elected to represent.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the Bill at this time, awaiting to see what amendments can be made.

Mr. Tchorzewski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make a few brief comments on this Bill as well, and I want to say that I am most pleased to follow the speaker who just spoke before me because he so articulately outlined. I think, what the real concerns about this Bill are, and what some possible alternatives might be.

And so I shall not repeat what he and others have said, but I do want to speak on behalf of the employees of SaskTel who have contacted myself by telephone and have spoken to me personally on many, many occasions since this legislation has been introduced.

They are concerned, they are seriously concerned, and I think they have a right to be. They expressed, those people who have contacted me and have contacted many other members of this side of the House, they expressed the concern which is shared by all of the people work for SaskTel.

Those kinds of concerns didn't used to exist, Mr. Speaker. There was always a feeling in SaskTel among management and among employees that there was a way available to them to resolve differences that might arise from time to time, and in fact that took place. But when this kind of legislation is introduced, all of a sudden coming out of nowhere by a minister of the Crown, that good will then obviously, Mr. Speaker, becomes very threatened. And it has.

What does section 10 . . . what does this section propose to do? Well it gives the corporation, which means the minister, because ultimately it all comes to the person answerable for the corporation to this Assembly, and that

is the minister - but it gives them the power to terminate the employee at the option of the corporation or the minister through the corporation after 15 years of service. And I say, Mr. Speaker, that that is a very, very ominous power. If there was some provision in the collective bargaining agreement to mitigate against some indiscreet action that the minister or the corporation might take, then that's another story. But I know that's not the case here.

If you look at the words of the Bill that's being proposed, the operative words, Mr. Speaker, are very serious. It says, "Where the corporation is of the opinion . . ." So all it takes is the opinion of the corporation. It can decide on its reasons and then state whatever it wishes.

But if in the opinion of the corporation, ". . . an employee is not able to meet the requirements of his employment and the employee has served (for) at least 15 years continuously," the corporation can cause the employee to lose his or her job.

Now what might the opinion of the corporation be? I want to list two or three examples of what they might be which may cause the corporation or the minister to cause this to happen, a little later in my remarks. But I think those words in themselves should make members of this House, no matter whether they're government members or opposition members, reconsider what this proposal states.

I would only hope as my colleague from Moose Jaw South has just indicated, that members opposite will look at this proposal when some amendments are introduced and concede that well, maybe the wording is wrong and something needs to be changed. I hope that will be the case, and that we will be able to make this fair for the employees of SaskTel.

What makes it even worse, Mr. Speaker, is that with that wording we're giving all the power to the minister and giving all that power to the corporation. There is no ability or no channel for appeal - absolutely none. They have the final word. When one considers the way this has come forward, one then certainly has to question what might be the motives of the government in bringing this forward, or certainly the minister. Surely there have to be other motives than some great feeling of benevolence about the need for early retirement provisions. Everybody agrees to that.

We on this side of the House agree that in some cases there has to be provision for early retirement. It has to be a situation in which it's optional, in which no one feels threatened. We'd be able to support that kind of a provision.

But this Bill comes to the House, Mr. Speaker, without the members, the employees, or the representatives of the employees, ever being consulted about it before it came here. That in itself leads us to have to wonder whether the real motive of the government is, as one of the members on this side of the House has said earlier, the setting up for the selling out of SaskTel. Or is it to provide the government an opportunity through its corporation board to, should I say, to get rid of certain employees that certain

members on the other side have developed a dislike for for whatever the reason that they may think are good reasons. There are other motives here, Mr. Speaker, and there can be no doubt about that.

If an employee is suffering from ill health, may become handicapped, may be suffering from stress, certainly there has to be a situation where arrangements have to be made in some cases for early retirement. We concede that. But there should then be a system which is rational and meaningful in which everybody understands, in which there can be some options provided and they can be worked out between employee, or the employee's representatives, and the management, to make sure that the employee is not wrongly done by.

My colleague used the example of the 35-year-old family person who has been working for the corporation for 15 years. What this proposal says is that after that period of time that 35-year-old individual is threatened because in the opinion of the corporation that 35-year-old employee can be let go. And I think that that is wrong. I hope members on the opposite side of the House will reconsider and also conclude that it is wrong, and will consider the kind of amendments which will make it right.

You know, the Bible teaches us that we are supposed to be our brothers' keepers, that we're supposed to be understanding of each other. This is not the kind of a provision that is in keeping with that kind of teaching. This is not the kind of provision that allows us to still be able to say, we are going to make sure that everyone is treated equally and fairly when they are employees of the government of the day.

I can't support that kind of a provision, and therefore I will not support it when it comes to a vote, Mr. Speaker.

It seems to me that what has developed since 1982 is a kind of an attitude by the government that the most effective way to govern is to use the tactic of fear. If you make people afraid - if you make people afraid of their job, if you make people afraid that they may not get an education, if you make people afraid that they may not be able to get a promotion if they say the wrong thing or if they happen to have a different political leaning than the government of the day, that somehow that will cause the government to remain in power and in control for as long as it wants.

I regret to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that in my personal opinion, for whatever it's worth, that is the kind of an approach that this government has taken since 1982 and has led it to introduce many Bills in this House, this one being an example, which has tried to put itself in the position to be able to govern in that way.

Now I could say and spend a great deal of time on the fact that even because of the particular minister who introduces this Bill, causes fear in the hearts of those people who work for SaskTel. Because here is the minister who said in a formal letter to all the employees of SaskTel a year ago, that if there is technological change, he gave a guarantee there would be no loss of jobs or

employment. Then when the negotiations came in the contract which was being negotiated, the minister would not take a stand because the election was over.

Now that same minister brings in this Bill and wonders why there is distrust of his word, or the word of the government. You can't deal with people that way. That is not the way people want their government to treat them. They think that when they elect a government they do it in good faith. They do it because they can trust the government to act fairly and in their best interests. Yes, make the hard decisions from time to time, but not make those decisions without any regard for what's fair and what's right.

This Bill provides a greater opportunity to create greater unfairness upon the employees of SaskTel by the corporation or by the minister, whether it is the present minister or some minister in the future.

I oppose this Bill because people who have committed their lives and have planned their futures around their employment, in my opinion, should be treated fairly by their employer. They deserve that. And over the years in SaskTel it has been said by many people in the province and out of this province, that this corporation used to be looked upon as a model of labour-management relations. For over 40 years there was never a major dispute between management and the workers of SaskTel. Only very recently did it reach that stage.

What has gone wrong? Surely it has to be because of the deterioration of labour-management relations throughout the province since this government was elected in 1982.

Mr. Speaker, I want to simply conclude by saying that I am worried about this Bill because it gives the corporation, and the minister, or the government directing it through the minister, an opportunity, in the opinion of the corporation, to dismiss an employee because the employee happened to believe that it was important for that individual to become involved in the activity of that individual's union. That's wrong. It gives, in the opinion of the corporation and the minister and the government, a chance to dismiss an employee after 15 years because somehow that employee was seen at the function of a political party that was not the political party that was governing on that particular day. If they dismiss an employee - because in the opinion, the corporation feels that employee is not being able to meet requirements of the corporation - for being seen in the wrong restaurant . . . And that may seem like a frivolous example, but I tell you, Mr. Speaker, it is not, because it is known in Saskatchewan, that to some degree, that kind of network exists which reports back to this government.

The provision gives government unrestricted discretion to retire employees for virtually any reason at all if it deems that they don't meet the requirements of the corporation of this government.

(1600)

I therefore stand in this House today to voice my support for those employees who express their concern. And on

behalf of them and their families, who with this provision will be threatened, I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I intend to oppose this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to enter this debate. I'm not delighted with the reasons for the debate, but indeed it's a pleasure to follow so many speakers on this side of the House who have spoken so well for the employees of Saskatchewan Telecommunications and against this Bill 14, which is going to potentially force early retirement on many employees of SaskTel.

I want to state up front that many of us on this side of the House favour the option of early retirement. We certainly see an enhancement of early retirement options as being a desirable direction to go. We also, many of us, favour enhanced portability of pensions, where pensions can be moved if you work for SaskTel, for example, for . . . pick a number of years, but say eight years, and then you go to SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), for another example, you could take that pension and move it straight into the SGI pension plan so that when your retirement comes along, that working person - though he or she may have worked at two or more Crown corporations - that person's pension would be just as large or as significant as though that person had stayed with SaskTel right from day one in their working lives, right through to the end, to their retirement.

So we favour the option of early retirement, and we certainly are in favour of portability of pensions. Early retirements, Mr. Speaker, should allow tired people out - people that have no longer got the enthusiasm for their employment, but are approaching the time of their lives when they should be able to take a break from their working careers and enjoy the balance of their lives.

Early retirement, also, would offer the option for many employees that are simply tired of working for that particular employer, for whatever their reasons, to take their early retirement and perhaps enter into another career, and their pension still be maintained - their pension being at a reasonable level that they could live on.

So I'm against Bill 14 because this gives SaskTel the sole discretion, sole discretion, Mr. Speaker, regarding retirement. It has been pointed out that this is not acceptable to members on this side of the House. We see this unilateral, heavy-handed, thin edge of the wedge, so to speak, Bill as just being wronged-headed.

What Bill 14 does for SaskTel, it most certainly will be set up to do for all of the other Crown corporations in Saskatchewan. There can be little doubt that SaskTel is only the first Crown corporation that is going to have this new mandatory retirement introduced and this uncertainty forced upon the workers of SaskTel. And for those reasons I am certainly against Bill 14.

Section 10(1) of the Bill, and it has been read before but it leads into the next part of my argument where it says that:

Where the corporation is of the opinion that an employee is not able to meet the requirements of his employment . . .

And I'll stop there for a minute because there already are provisions in the collective agreement. When an employee is not able to satisfactorily perform their work, there are already methods of dealing with that unsatisfactory work performance. And in the case of an illness there is already, Mr. Speaker, provision to take care of someone that perhaps suffers, for example, a stroke at whatever age. That provision is in the sickness and disability insurance that all employees pay into, and as a matter of course if they are struck with an illness such as a stroke, they are entitled to receive sick and disability benefits. So it's simply a red herring to say somebody's health may deteriorate and thus we have the need for a forced early retirement. It just simply is not so.

And as I've mentioned before, the unsatisfactory work level is already dealt with. Every single employee of SaskTel has a supervisor that should be dealing with any unsatisfactory work performance. There is a grievance procedure if that supervisor does something that the employee feels is not fair and not right. That's one of the reasons why we have unions. So both unsatisfactory work performance and illness are both presently covered. That makes the imposition of a mandatory early retirement at the sole discretion of SaskTel totally unnecessary.

The member for Moose Jaw South has pointed out earlier in his speech that any reason for a mandatory retirement is simply heavy-handed and that, indeed, if the intention of the minister responsible for this Bill is simply to enhance early retirement, then we are urging the minister to withdraw the Bill or to adopt some substantive amendments that take out - and what we really want taken out is the words where it says "at the sole discretion of the corporation." That's what we object to, at the sole discretion of the corporation.

Mr. Speaker, there's one other element to this debate that I have not heard previously, and that is simply that there's many people now working in SaskTel and many people contemplating employment in SaskTel that have taken specialty training to get into the telecommunications field - specialty training for which there is one major employer in the province, the major employer being SaskTel.

For those people with the specialty training, if they are forced into an early retirement and yet they are, as in the example cited, 35 years of age or some similar age to that, those people most certainly would then have to leave Saskatchewan, not come in, not bringing the children home - it's rather a move to force the people out of the province. And for that reason, it's just a bad Bill.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I just want to urge the minister to withdraw and amend . . . make some serious amendments to this Bill. It should be a fairly simple and straightforward way of proceeding on this, unless indeed there is this hidden agenda that says: we have to know what the political affiliation of an employee is, and if that employee does not happen to have a little blue card that says "PC" on it, they'll be fired.

That's what we fear. And we deal with this daily, Mr. Speaker. I know in my own constituency we are now in a membership drive, and I'm running into it on some doorsteps. There is a good number of people, thank goodness, that are saying, now if I don't exercise my political freedom, I don't have a political freedom. And despite the threats that they see hovering over them, they are going out and they're purchasing memberships in our party. And to those people I'm most grateful, and indeed I'll welcome any new additions along that line.

So in conclusion I stand here in support of the employees of Saskatchewan Telecommunications and in support of all employees of the various Crown corporations that will be next, if this Bill proceeds as it stands now. I'm in support of those employees, and I am against Bill 14.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As minister responsible for SaskTel, I'd like to just take the opportunity to respond to some of the allegations made by members opposite; some of them I find rather strange, but I think one can weave them all into one theme.

And let me take several of them . . . first of all, the member from, I believe, Saskatoon Centre who espoused for the first time, I believe, in any forum, that women should be protected in the traditional work place; that is where they should be and that there should be no effort to encourage them to move into the non-traditional jobs. And if I've ever heard a more retrograde argument, it was from the female member from Saskatoon Centre, where she defended the ability of women to be telephone operators. And that's what she wanted protected. And she said, we have to defend that right to be telephone operators.

They're 10 years behind times, Mr. Speaker. SaskTel has the most progressive legislation and activity to enhance the ability of women to take the non-traditional jobs of any telecommunication company in North America. And our affirmative action program was approved three years ago by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and is considered, in North America, the most progressive. And no corporation has made a greater effort to enhance the position and opportunities of women than SaskTel.

And yet we have the NDP defending: keep them as telephone operators. And that is precisely what the member from Saskatoon Centre did. I found her comments about the business conference absolutely shocking. "Women shouldn't buy franchise that hire women," she said.

There have been more women in business under this administration than ever in the history of this province, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think that should be fettered because the hon. member doesn't like the type of franchise. And I find her activities, Mr. Speaker, rather . . . I suppose Edwardian would be polite. I think they are antediluvian more than anything, Mr. Speaker, they go back so far.

It's rather amazing, Mr. Speaker, when a couple of those

members had the opportunity in this debate to make up their own speeches, rather than the canned speeches, where their real thinking comes from.

I find, Mr. speaker, the criticisms of the members opposite rather strange in that three months ago, Mr. Speaker - and the press will verify this - the member from Regina Rosemont, the member from Regina North, the member from Regina North East, and member after member stood up in this Assembly and condemned this government for an early retirement program for civil servants. They condemned it; they condemned it publicly; they condemned it in this Assembly and everybody is witness to it. And today they stand up here saying, oh, we support an early retirement program, don't get us wrong.

I'll tell you why everyone had to repeat that, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you why every single member had to repeat that, is because they're getting the same message from SaskTel employees that we're getting, which is they like the early retirement program and they didn't like the comments of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

And I find it interesting that within three months, within three months, the members opposite have gone from attacking and opposing . . . And I think the opposition critic of the Public Service Commission, as a matter of fact, was even stronger in his condemnation, saying you can't have an early retirement because it's too costly and it doesn't save any money. Isn't it funny, the flip-flop that we see going on.

(1615)

Mr. Speaker, the strangest argument was the last one. The strangest argument where the hon. member said there are people who want to get into SaskTel, or people who are taking the technical studies where they look at their occupation in SaskTel, or maybe they've been doing a particular technical activity for 15 years and SaskTel isn't going to do it any more, they have no choice but to leave the province. Where would they go? Let me tell you, if SaskTel isn't using a new technology, I strongly suspect that there are very, very few other telecommunication companies in North America that would be using it. So where would they go? I'll tell you where they would have to go if you take the hon. member's argument - the Third World, Mr. Speaker. Now that was the silliest argument I have heard.

And let me tell you what SaskTel does, in fact, do. When there is technological change, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel gives the training to its existing employees and takes the opportunity and the time. And I said that there was a common theme running through, and we've heard it over and over and over again from the NDP opposition, and that is: don't change anything; don't change anything. If they had their way, Mr. Speaker, people would be talking with tin cans and strings - tin cans and strings - and the repairmen would be going out in a horse and buggy, Mr. Speaker, and that's the telecommunication system they want.

And let's take a look at the changes, Mr. Speaker, it's not very long ago under a New Democratic Party, under a

New Democratic Party . . . you shouldn't be reading, you should be listening . . . the hon. member, you should be paying attention, because you would certainly learn something.

Mr. Speaker, I can remember nearly six years ago, Mr. Speaker, the only province in Canada, Mr. Speaker, that the people couldn't even buy a telephone, couldn't even buy a telephone, was the province of Saskatchewan, under the NDP SaskTel communications policy, couldn't even buy a telephone. They couldn't go, Mr. Speaker, down to their telmarts. They couldn't go to a SaskTel telmart, Mr. Speaker, to look at telephones. That was a sin, Mr. Speaker. That was a sin. What happens now? SaskTel has telmarts. You don't think the employees like them? Let me tell you that the employees happen to believe that the telmarts, Mr. Speaker, are one of the best symbols of a progressive attitude in SaskTel that didn't exist before.

Mr. Speaker, business men were so limited in the number of phones that business men under the NDP administration ere having to hook up illegally to try and get the most modern means of communication because SaskTel didn't want to carry it under the NDP. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that they now have the access to the most modern communication facilities anywhere in the country. And I find, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP so opposed individual line service when they were in government so that the people in rural Saskatchewan could have the most modern telecommunication facilities and services and equipment anywhere in Canada, and they opposed it.

And, Mr. Speaker, they also on the other side insisted on the absolute monopoly to keep people out, to keep equipment out, to keep this new technology out. And of course on the other side they wanted the absolute monopoly of cable television. And that had to be owned, run, and hooked up by the government, Mr. Speaker. That's the NDP policy.

So we take a look, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I say that because there were numerous changes that we've made over the last few years. People can, in fact, have a choice on telephones and they're not complaining about it. People are not forced to subsidize the cable television industry through SaskTel, Mr. Speaker, rural people are getting individual line service and getting it leased at a minimum city-level service.

And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, through all of this and through all the doom and gloom and scare tactics opposite, there wasn't one lay-off because of technological change during those years, Mr. Speaker. What we have seen, what we have seen - and I must freely admit, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps I have not communicated with the employees of SaskTel as aggressively as I should, and I will rectify that; and I know, when I get the information back to the individual employees, that I will have the full support of the members opposite for doing it - that through all of those changes, Mr. Speaker, there wasn't one lay-off.

Now, Mr. Speaker, is change going to stop in SaskTel? No, it is not. We intend to make the changes so that

Saskatchewan people will have the most modern telecommunications system over the next 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years, Mr. Speaker, and we won't apologize to anybody about that. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we will have the support of everybody in the province of Saskatchewan to that objective except for the New Democratic Party members.

Mr. Speaker, no industry is undergoing more change than the telecommunications industry. It would be an unwise government that says: we are going to stop that change; that we can't have the new technology; that we have to go back to the crank telephones. Mr. Speaker, that is not realistic; that is not realistic. It is not good government to take that approach, and I believe most strongly that it is not in the best interests of the people of this province to resist change in the telecommunication industry - just the opposite, Mr. Speaker, we must move rapidly. We must move rapidly to allow our business men access to the latest telecommunication technology, access to computers, access to the services that they need to continue to be efficient and effective.

We must look at new means of telecommunication for our distance education. We must, Mr. Speaker, continue, and I suggest most rapidly, with rural individual line service so that rural people have access to the most modern means of communication.

To go backwards, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. members have advocated, have advocated, Mr. Speaker, is wrong, and it's wrong-headed. We've been over the legislation, and the legislation in no way justifies the extreme attacks made upon it by the members opposite. As we go through with this rapid change, and give the employees of SaskTel the opportunity to take the training, we know unfortunately that some won't, and we want the ability to deal with them fairly.

At the same time we want to be able to deal, Mr. Speaker, with the right of the people of this province because we believe it is a right to have the most access to the most modern telecommunication means possible, Mr. Speaker. And that's really what this Bill is about. Are we going to stand still as the NDP want, or are we going to change and maintain a leadership role in telecommunications? And that's what this legislation is all about.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed that we have had another example as the NDP continue to pound the nails into their own coffin of the past. Mr. Speaker, I support the legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1634)

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas - 27

Devine	Duncan
McLeod	Andrew
Toth	Sauder
Johnson	McLaren

Berntson	Lane
Taylor	Maxwell
Gerich	Hepworth
Hardy	Klein
Meiklejohn	Pickering
Hopfner	Swenson
Martens	Baker
Gleim	Neudorf
Gardner	Kopelchuk
Britton	

Nays - 11

Prebble	Brockelbank
Koskie	Tchorzewski
Rolfes	Atkinson
Lyons	Calvert
Trew	Smart
Koenker	

The Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Parks, Recreation and Culture
Ordinary Expenditure - Vote 39**

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Brockelbank: Mr. Chairman, when this minister's estimates were last before the House, I was in the process of asking him a question about the level of the water in Lake Diefenbaker, and I was forced to take a detour by the Minister of Highways to adjournment.

I just want to lay out the question for the minister again. And the reason I raised the question about the level of the water in Lake Diefenbaker is that it varies, in my reckoning, about 18 feet - and that's quite a variation in the lake level, and it has its impact on resort areas that surround the lake. And I ask the minister because there is a resort area called Douglas Provincial Park, and I was wanting to know if it's a matter of concern in the park that the level of the lake varies a great deal, because I will tell the minister, the resort village immediately north of Douglas Park, which is Mistusinne, it is a matter of considerable concern there.

And I realize that's not pertinent to this information here, but I wanted to know from the minister whether on the resort areas that the minister has a responsibility for around Lake Diefenbaker: is the large variation in the elevation of the lake of a serious concern and, if so, has it been necessary for the minister to make representations to the commission that controls the level of the lake?

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: Mr. Chairman, the resort village referred to has got nothing to do with my department. It's not under my jurisdiction.

Mr. Brockelbank: That's exactly what I stated, Mr. Minister. I said the resort village is peripheral to the question I was asking you. I was asking you the question: is the large variation in the water level in Lake Diefenbaker a matter

of concern to the provincial parks or other villages or other establishments and facilities that you are responsible for? Is it a matter of concern there?

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: Well, Mr. Chairman, as the hon. member would know, water fluctuation and monitoring those levels is a responsibility that is ongoing with the water Crown, and they've been looking after that. We haven't had any specific complaints other than one to do with a boat launch this year, and we try and address those problems as they arise. And the fluctuation is not 18 feet; it's 27.

(1645)

Mr. Brockelbank: Thank you, Mr. Minister, for your response. I realize that the water fluctuation is quite severe, and it may be more. I was being conservative in my estimate when I said it might be 18 feet. It think it was over that in the last 12 months - well over that.

All I really wanted to know, Mr. Minister, if it was necessary for you to make representations to the commission, and you said it is not, and that's fine; that's the answer that the minister has given.

The second question I have for the minister has to do with a request that I made in writing to him, I believe, in the latter part of July or the beginning of August. And it had to do with the space allocation from the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation. And the second part of it was with regard to departmental consultants that the department retained over a period of time. Is the minister familiar with the request that I sent him? If not, I'll read it into the record.

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: Mr. Chairman, I am familiar with the request.

Mr. Brockelbank: I wonder if the minister has the information with regard to the (a) and (b) part of the requests that I made.

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: Mr. chairman, I have all the pieces of part (a); it's quite extensive. I have some of part (b); some is ongoing, and I can make a commitment to provide it in writing.

Mr. Brockelbank: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the minister for providing the information. And I might say at this point that he is the third minister that has complied with my request in a rather expeditious fashion, and I want to thank him for that.

Mr. Calvert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, it's been some time since we've been together in estimates . . .

An Hon. Member: I missed you.

Mr. Calvert: And I missed you. I was beginning to wonder if we were ever going to get back together, so it's good to have you back, and I'm sure we will finish these estimates some day - some day. We've got, I think,

today about 10 minutes, so we can maybe tidy up one little issue. I'm kind of reminded of a colleague of mine who says, you know: inch by inch, everything's a cinch. So we'll do it inch by inch, and we'll get there.

When last we were talking, we ended talking about Mr. Light's collection in Battleford, and at that time you indicated to me that you, or officials of your department, would be meeting with Mr. Light in regard to the purchase of his collection. I'd like to know if you've had that meeting, and the results of that meeting.

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: Mr. Chairman, officials had met with the gentleman in question on the ninth of the month to discuss options for acquisition of his ethnological collection. It was a very amiable meeting and discussions are ongoing, negotiations are ongoing.

Mr. Calvert: Mr. Minister, are you then confident that we will see this collection purchased by the Government of Saskatchewan, and that in fact it will remain in the province?

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: I'm confident that if the gentleman would like to meet our conditions it will remain in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Calvert: Mr. Minister, I, and certainly other members of this caucus, and I'm sure the whole community of North Battleford, will be watching the progress carefully on these negotiations.

If we may perhaps, Mr. Minister, just turn to another collection that is seemingly being threatened by the inaction of your government in its regard, and we may be able to just explore this a bit before 5 o'clock.

I, on the ninth of this month, wrote you a letter, and I know you haven't had time yet to respond to it, regarding the Plains Historical Museum here in Regina. These folks, too, are in danger of having to close their doors. You'll be well aware that this museum holds a very valuable collection and offers valuable programming to the city of Regina and beyond the city. You're aware that the current financial uncertainty that the board faces means that it's not able to replace its one staff member who has left the province, or is leaving the province. And you will also be aware that this Plains Historical Museum has some real potential to be a leader in creating a Regina Plains Historical Museum.

Now, it's my understanding, Mr. Minister, that the Plains Historical Museum board has, in fact, approached your department for support and funding. Could you, this day, report on their request and whether in fact that request will receive a favourable response from you and your department?

Hon. Mr. Maxwell: Mr. Chairman, I believe that some of the consternation stems from the fact that there was some uncertainty on behalf of the museum as to whether or not the grant program would be ongoing, under which they have been covered in the past. In fact, they have the last four years received some assistance from the province to the maximum allowed under that particular program, which is called museum and gallery grant

program. I'm happy to say, Mr. Chairman, that they will be supported again this year, \$9,000, which is the maximum grant allowable under the terms of that program.

I realize that their one full-time staff member is moving to Hamilton, I believe. And the reason for that move has nothing to do with the government or the gallery. The gentleman's wife accepted a job in Hamilton, and he's decided to move with her. So that's the situation as far as that's concerned.

Yes, we will be granting them, as we have in the past, \$9,000, Mr. Chairman.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.