

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
March 22, 1988

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give notice of intention to introduce a Bill. I give notice that on Thursday I shall introduce a Bill to amend The Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure today to introduce to you some adult patients of the Cancer Patient Lodge located here in Regina. The adults located in the Speaker's gallery are accompanied by Evelyn Francis and driver Myrna Kew.

It is a real pleasure for me to introduce these people to members of the legislature because this, to my knowledge, is the last group to attend here while the present member for Regina Elphinstone is the member, and I am sitting in for the member for Elphinstone in this. So please join me in welcoming the people from the Cancer Patient Lodge here in Regina. Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to other members of the Assembly, 16 students from the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn who are visiting here as exchange students with Luther College. I would ask them to stand.

They are accompanied by Pastor Don King, who is the principal of Luther College; Mr. Behrla and Ms. Hagen, who are their German teachers who are with them; also with chaperons Lynn Youck, Randi Kennedy, Marg Tiefenback, and Penny Wingert.

And I would ask all members of the Assembly to welcome them today. We will be having refreshments. They are on a tour of the legislature. We'll be having pictures taken later, and I hope that all members would help welcome these guests from the Federal Republic of Germany today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Saxinger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would like to follow the member from Rosemont to also welcome the group from Germany in their native tongue, if I may.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in German.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goodale: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure all hon. members of the House will recognize the very familiar face sitting behind the bar on the opposition side,

and I would invite all hon. members to welcome back to the Chamber a former member of this Assembly, Mr. Wilf Gardiner.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Task Force on Health

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first words must be thanks to the government side for what I'm sure will be the last round of applause that I get from them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the Premier, if I might. Mr. Premier, given what many people in Saskatchewan have concluded is a pretty atrocious record by your government in the question of health care — I won't document the details of that — you can appreciate why many are sceptical about what the real purpose might be behind yesterday's Speech from the Throne announcement respecting the task force on health. Some think that it's like the fox guarding the chicken coop, to use the old saying.

We would like specifics, sir, and I direct your attention specifically to the proposed mandate of the task force. My question is this: isn't it correct to say that the real purpose of the government in this task force is to try to show — wrongly, I would submit — that the cost of health care in Saskatchewan is way out of line, and this in this way to justify your government's policy for further privatization of Saskatchewan's health care system, and even the imposition of deterrent fees some time in the future?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health will be announcing the details of the task force and the members of the task force in the near future, and the guide-lines and the objectives of that task force as it tours the province of Saskatchewan. It will be holding public hearings with professionals and members of the public to gather their views on what a blueprint for health care into the next century would look like for the province of Saskatchewan.

I would add one other point, Mr. Speaker, that health care expenditures and our commitment to health care is 63 per cent higher than it was when we took office, which is relatively significant because it's now \$1.2 billion and growing, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Premier who, as the members of the House will know, has not answered my question. And I must preface the supplementary by pointing out that in the *Leader-Post* of December 22 . . . I'll ask a new question, Mr. Speaker, with your permission, but in the *Leader-Post* of December 22, 1987 . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. I'm afraid I cannot allow

the member to rise on a supplementary and then switch to a new question for the sake of a quotation.

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I then shall ask a new question, because my first question was not answered. On December 22, 1987, the Regina *Leader-Post* carried the following headline covering the Progressive Conservative Party convention in Saskatoon. The headline says: "PC resolution calls for user fees for medicare." The body of the story quotes the following which is a preface to the question:

"The delegates seem to be suggesting that it would be a good idea if there was a certain form of payment (on the people) so that the people would be more conscious of the costs of health care," says PC president Dr. Peter Matthews of Saskatoon.

My question to the Premier is this: is it not correct to say that this task force on health care that you announced yesterday in the Speech from the Throne is really going to be the basis to justify your government imposing your party's resolution of deterrent fees and cut-backs and privatization of health care?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I have congratulated the new Leader of the Opposition before, and I will congratulate him again today on the position, but I must say I'm a little disappointed that the old line is already his first sentence as a new leader. I mean he is now saying, despite the fact that we've increased expenditures in health by 63 per cent and we have created 1,741 new nursing-bed homes here . . . or position beds in the province of Saskatchewan, and he is still saying the same thing he said in '82 and '86, that there will be no money allocated to health care, and the fact that we will privatize health care.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I will say we have made a major commitment to health care. This task force is to ask the people of Saskatchewan and the professionals about their guidance with respect to a new blueprint for health care into the future. And, Mr. Speaker, if that's all that there is in the opposition side with respect to their advice is to — as they did in '75 and they did in '78 and '82 and '86 and they're still doing — is to frighten people, I would say, Mr. speaker, that we will see constructive development of health care from this side of the House and not much but rhetoric over there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Premier. If the Premier feels that I, as Leader of the Opposition, and this side of the House are trying to frighten the people, there's one very simple, easy way to put that fear to rest. My question to you, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Premier, is simply this: why don't you put that fear to rest and tell the people of Saskatchewan now that this task force is not going to be intended to privatize further our health care and impose deterrent fees. Put that fear to rest, and give the assurance today that you're not going to impose deterrent fees.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I have said to the hon. member that the task force will be announced and its objectives announced to clearly build a blueprint, a new blueprint for the province of Saskatchewan in health care. And the minister will be announcing that in the next few days.

Rest assured, Mr. Speaker, all of the public knows that the opposition will say that we are going to tear it down and close hospitals, and we are going to frighten people, and we're going to charge them — and all of that is not true, Mr. speaker, and the opposition's members know it. The Leader of the Opposition knows it, and if it's his claim to fame to run about trying to frighten people, fair enough. I think he's starting off on the wrong foot, but we'll clearly see after the task force is finished and completed with his recommendations to the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, a new question. The Premier will know that the Speech from the Throne was probably the most vague of all Speeches from the Throne, certainly in my years of experience, and therefore I'd like to get some further details on this important question of health care — to which the Premier says we're trying to frighten people, and to which I say the very existence of the task force frightens the people of Saskatchewan, given your record.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — My question is this, Mr. Speaker. From the fact that newspaper reports indicate that almost nobody in the health care professional field has been consulted with respect to this health care task force, nobody knows of the details of the composition — the Deputy Premier laughs at that.

My question to the Premier perhaps will clarify this question: will the Premier specifically advise the House who it is that will sit on the task force report? Will it be a cross-section of interested and informed Saskatchewan citizens, or will it be like your other task forces that you've established in the past, mainly made up of a committee of back-bench hack PCers or hack PC members? Is there going to be a legitimate task force or one used to propagate your privatization policy in health?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the Minister of Health will be announcing the task force members and their guide-lines and the objectives, and he will see, as the public will see, these will be men and women of quality and substance and excellence, very knowledgeable in the question of health care. I frankly don't refer to members of the legislature sitting on the back benches over there as "hacks," and I don't think that he would recommend that we get into that name-calling so early in the legislature.

Clearly when the minister announces the task force, then

the hon. member will be able to look at their qualifications and look at the reputation of the men and women that will serve in this public capacity, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the use of the . . . new question. I withdraw the use of the word "hacks" of the back-benchers opposite. Perhaps I should use the word "somewhat compliant" members of the back bench in referring this. But my question, Mr. Speaker, the new question is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and I should hope the same, that's true, but we have a thinking party on this side, so I don't think we'll be quite as compliant as yours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Anyway, Mr. Speaker, my final question to the Premier is in this regard. Surely, Mr. Premier, there is something that your government must have thought about in announcing this task force in advance of making the announcement. Surely this wasn't an idea that was just pulled out of the air without any consultation from the health care professionals or anybody else. You haven't been able to tell us the composition; you haven't been able to tell us the mandate; you haven't been able to tell us the timetable.

Can you tell us about the budget? Is this going to be a multi-million-dollar budget on the task force, and will it be spent to study the issues, or will it be spent to advertise your particular version of privatized health care like you've done in so many of the areas of free trade? What's the budget going to look like? Can you tell us that, at least?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, this is the best, frankly, the best promotion that we could expect for this new task force — the fact that the hon. members raises all the interests and raises all the questions. I can tell you, in the many meetings that I've been in with health care people and professionals they have asked for a blueprint on health care well into the next century so we can provide guidance, not only to Saskatchewan people, but indeed to the rest of the country. And I welcome all the questions from the Leader of the Opposition and all members, because I'm sure that the media will comment on it and raise the interest when the minister does announce it. We'll have wide public interest, and hopefully then wide public participation.

So thank you for your questions, and we appreciate the hype and the interest. I'm sure we'll find that it's a very good task force and very interested public in terms of the recommendations in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Restrictions on Assiniboia Ambulance Services

Mr. Goodale: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Health, to the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker. As the minister knows, there is

tremendous public anxiety in and around Assiniboia respecting the operations of the local ambulance service, Wald Ambulance Ltd. Recent restrictions have been imposed upon that service, and Wald Ambulance is no longer allowed to undertake the broad range of procedures which it used to provide, and provide, I might say, Mr. Speaker, with much local praise and commendation from people in the Assiniboia district.

I wonder if the minister would take the opportunity today to offer some specific reassurance to Wald Ambulance, and to the people of Assiniboia, by indicating precisely the source of the perceived problem that triggered the imposition of these restrictions on this ambulance service, and what is the minister doing personally and directly and immediately to get to the bottom of that situation and thereby relieve the anxiety that presently exists in very large measure in the Assiniboia district?

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm aware of the situation that the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg outlines. The member brought it to my attention, I believe, a week or so ago, and we talked about it for some period of time then.

Mr. Speaker, the situation just very briefly is somewhat as the member outlines it. There is a protocol in the province as it relates to ambulance operators and paramedics or trained people who work within those ambulance units as to the types of drugs that may be administered by them during the course of their duties in remote areas, and so on. That protocol is very much in line with what is recommended by the College of Physicians and Surgeons in the province, as everyone can well imagine, that that would need to be the case in terms of the administration of drugs.

It's a very complicated issue. What I would say to the member, in a very specific answer to his question in terms of what I'm doing, our people in the Department of Health are co-ordinating the reaction of the college of Physicians and Surgeons with the ambulance operator. I know that there's a concern among the public at Assiniboia. Some of that concern is certainly ill-founded, and I believe that there will be a satisfactory resolution to the problem fairly soon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear the minister anticipates a solution fairly soon. But I would like to ask the minister specifically: will he be prepared in this ministerial capacity to work directly and closely with Wald Ambulance and with people locally in the Assiniboia district to restore to them a proper range of emergency ambulance services that are appropriate to a broad rural area some considerable distance from any urban centre and a service that would be properly within the bounds of reason and safety. I think it needs the minister's personal attention in that area.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly what the people in the Department of Health and the ambulance division have been doing is to bring about ambulance service, the administration of drugs, the specific thing that I've talked about, and to bring all of that and that service to the people in that area within the bounds of reason and safety. That sort of fits what we try to

do with all of our ambulance service across the province.

I know there's a specific concern here, as I've said. As far as my becoming involved with the community or talking to individuals in the community and so on, at this stage I'm not sure that that's necessary, but if it becomes necessary, there's no question that I would be available to do something like that. Certainly people within the Department of Health are now working on bringing about a successful resolution to this and I believe, as I've said in my earlier answer, Mr. Speaker, that there will be a successful resolution to the problem, some of which is real, and some of which is perceived, Mr. Speaker.

Farm Production Loan Program

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier in regards to the farm production loan program.

Mr. Premier, in December of 1987 you announced changes to the production loan program which you gave farmers an option to extend the period of repayment at a higher interest rate and a tough new security agreement. In 1985 when he announced the program, your then minister of Agriculture called it hassle-free cash. And I quote, he said:

We believe in our farmers, we have faith in our farmers, and we are not about to let them down.

Mr. Premier, in 1985 you trusted Saskatchewan farmers. Why do you no longer have faith in our farm families?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, at the request of farm families, the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and many groups, we extended the payment program from three years to 10 years at the request of people. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we made sure that the public and the farming area had the option of maintaining their 6 per cent alternative, either on the three-year program or over the 10-year program. And beyond that, Mr. Speaker, because it was 10 years, we asked for security because 10 years obviously can go through two, possibly even three, different administrations, and to be fair to the taxpayers for \$1.2 billion over several administrations we asked for security.

There will be a release tomorrow or the next day, Mr. Speaker, if I could just add to the hon. member, that will outline to the public how successful the production loan program has been, how satisfactory the terms of the agreement are today by the farmers of Saskatchewan, and I'm sure the hon. member will be very interested in those results and that statistical evidence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Supplementary. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure farm families in Saskatchewan will be happy to hear that they asked for nine and three-quarter per cent interest and a tough security agreement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Premier, are you aware that the agreement with the huge U.S. multinational corporation, Weyerhaeuser, stated that no payments on loans were required in years when there were insufficient profits? Mr. Premier, the farmers of this province are asking: why can't we get the same deal as Weyerhaeuser?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it is interesting, and again I congratulate the new leader for his guidance in terms of the kinds of questions coming forward and the rhetoric we've heard for decades — the same old lines, Mr. Speaker, despite the new leader. I can only say to the hon. member . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please, Order. We're having difficulty hearing the Premier's answer, and there's a little bit of noise on both sides of the House, so I'd ask hon. members to allow him to answer.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, we have addressed the debt and low income situation in several fashions, and I could offer to the hon. member with respect to the Weyerhaeuser question, one, is a large amount of money that's cash in the hands of farmers, Mr. Speaker, in terms of cash advances at no interest rates at all that were not there before, and that's at no interest rates; and in the livestock sector they really appreciate that.

Secondly, the very large amount of money that comes from the federal government that is indeed a gift, Mr. Speaker, direct cash, no pay-back. In fact, a very large per cent of the farm income now in western Canada is from the government, from the federal government — which happens to be Progressive Conservative — and from the provincial government, through cash advances — which happens to be Progress Conservative — that you will not find in neighbouring provinces that aren't the same political persuasion or, Mr. Speaker, in other federal governments that have the opportunity to help.

So the combination of things that we have done provide very low interest loans well below what we've ever seen before, and even in terms of six per cent and nine and three-quarters, it averages about eight per cent, which is fixed and long-run, and the best in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, the same old questions that brought you down 20 per cent in the polls and will take you right out of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — New question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, you have said to Saskatchewan farmers that you have made an agreement with the banks in respect to the security provisions of the Ag Credit Corporation production loan. Mr. Minister, are the banks satisfied with that agreement?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — I believe the hon. member asked if

he could see the agreement. The agreements will be published in the next day or two along with information with respect to the production loan program, and both the Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan, the credit unions and the financial institutions, the bank, agreed on the resolution of the problem with respect to security. So all parties agreed the farmers can now get operating capital well into the future, as they did before in the initial operation, in the initial agreement, and, Mr. Speaker, that will be public in the next day or two.

Mr. Upshall: — Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the Premier obviously didn't understand or didn't hear my question. My question is, Mr. Speaker, are the banks satisfied with the agreement that you have made with them?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — I said, Mr. Speaker, that all parties there signed the agreement; that is, the Agricultural Credit Corporation here in Saskatchewan, the credit unions and the financial institutions, like the banks. And they all signed it, Mr. Speaker, and they put their name on the dotted line so that farmers could have the capacity to have operating, and access to operating capital, as they did in the first instance. The farmers are very happy with that, Mr. Speaker, and all parties have signed it.

As I said in public, Mr. Speaker, I signed it because I have the option as a farmer that you can pay the thing off without any penalty, and it gives you the 10-year flexibility that the wheat pool and SARM and others ask for — and that's precisely what you want — and still have access to operating capital.

And the member opposite perhaps doesn't understand that, but we could take some time and explain it to him in some detail that farmers are responding, and they understand it, and they have 10 years, and they have complete flexibility at fixed interest rates over 10 years, and they haven't had that any place in the country, and that is the best you'll find any place in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, if a farmer has the money, he has an option; if he has no money, he has no option.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Minister, the banks are happy, obviously; the government's happy; Weyerhaeuser's happy. Mr. Minister, will you give the farmers the same deal that you gave to Weyerhaeuser? Would you please answer that?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I am advised by people who know the financial institutions that on good legal advice the Bank of Nova Scotia has agreed to sign this. And they believe . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — They believe, Mr. Speaker, that the program that we have put together is an awful lot better

than many of the other programs that some people have been working on with respect to saving farmers and foreclosing on farmers or helping them out.

So I will say that, if it's any comfort to you at all, given the affiliation of the Bank of Nova Scotia with some of you there, they believe that it's reasonable. They believe that farmers will have an opportunity to pay back over 10 years with complete flexibility, Mr. Speaker, and at the same time, Mr. Speaker you can pay it off without penalty.

Now at 8 per cent money fixed for 10 years, Mr. Speaker, you have every right for 3 years at 6 per cent; and moving into the 10-year agreement, that is 8 per cent for 10 years, Mr. Speaker. It's as good as you're going to find any place in the nation.

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, the deal with Weyerhaeuser, which my question was about and the Premier obviously is skirting around, states that they have to make no payments until a certain level of profit has been reached. Last year the government saw fit simply to ask farmers to apply the interest.

Mr. Minister, will you tell the farmers of this province whether they're going to be treated on the same basis as a multinational foreign corporation? Are you going to give them the same treatment, or are they going to be treated as lesser people in their own province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — The members opposite said, Mr. Speaker, that the province would never see a new paper mill and Weyerhaeuser wouldn't be built. The members opposite locked the people of Saskatchewan into \$91,000 a day loss — \$370-some million, Mr. Speaker, and they said it could never be fixed.

Let's just make the point, Mr. Speaker, that \$240 million cash is coming back to the province of Saskatchewan, plus over \$200 million and a brand new paper mill — and the paper mill is opening August 1 to August 15 in the province of Saskatchewan, despite all the scare tactics of the NDP, which said it would never be built and the jobs weren't there.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the new Leader of the Opposition, we have heard this same music for 15 years. I mean, is this all there is to the new leadership of the NDP party?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And at the outset let me say that it is a comfortable feeling to be back behind my desk here, speaking once more on behalf of the constituents back at home.

I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to first

of all welcome you back as well, sir, and certainly all the members of the legislature. I trust that the period of recess that we have had has been enjoyable and that it has been productive, and at the same time a trust that the new session that we are about to start now is also going to be productive for all of the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I consider it one of the great privileges of my political career to move this address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. And before I begin my substantive remarks, Mr. Speaker, I would like to explain something to the young people of Saskatchewan and to some members of this House.

The procedure that we are going through today is called the address in reply because in effect it is an address to Her Majesty through the Lieutenant Governor replying to the Speech from the Throne that she has laid before us. And this procedure, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is fundamental to our democracy and our system of government. It is based on the historic fact that the monarch receives the advice of her first minister, the Premier, and delivers through her Lieutenant Governor the plans for the legislature.

Now we all know that those plans are drafted by the government, but this does not take away from the fundamental role that the monarchy plays in our way of life. I raise these things, Mr. Speaker, because we live in a system that embodies the principles of freedom and discipline, each supporting the other, and the whole package delivered in a format of dignity and respect.

I suggest that all those characteristics are vital to the effective functioning of our democracy, and indeed to the successful conduct of the business of this Assembly. Freedom and discipline. Dignity and respect. I sincerely hope, Mr. Speaker, that all members will consider those important elements as this session unfolds; that they will duly exercise the freedoms that they enjoy, guaranteed by the sovereign; that in the exercise of those freedoms they will conduct themselves with a discipline that is becoming a member of this Legislative Assembly and which is embodied in the very person of Her Majesty and her agent, the Lieutenant Governor; that they will present themselves with dignity and not fall prey to the expediencies of fear mongering which we heard during question period this afternoon — the disruption and disregard for this institution. And finally, Mr. Speaker, that they will provide that respect not only to this Assembly, but to the people of our province, that both are entitled to.

Mr. Speaker, the Lieutenant Governor said it well when he said that this is the time for hope and it is a time of commitment, of commitment to the land and to the people that we love.

Let me briefly review, Mr. Speaker, the nature of commitment that I believe is reflected in the throne speech and which has been demonstrated by this government. The sources of prosperity of our province have been subject to the worst disruptions since the Great Depression. Indeed we have come through drought and dust bowls very reminiscent of those dark days.

The prices we have been able to obtain on the rural

market for all of our commodities have declined, in some cases to the point of disaster. We've had to face a crisis in our potash industry, and a threatened crisis in our uranium industry. The international market in high technology has been under severe pressure. The oil and gas industry has seen, at best, tenuous recoveries, only to be faced with renewed price erosions. And most compelling of all, Mr. Speaker, we have had to face the serious situations involving every farm family in this province.

With the many other financial crunches that have taken place, this government was left in a situation where government revenues were dropping rapidly while the cost for all of our most basic programs continued to escalate out of control. This has been a reality, Mr. Speaker, a reality that no matter how much we may not want to accept it, ignore it, it would be the ruin of all we hold dear and all we have built over so many generations.

Mr. Speaker, in this context of turmoil, economic crisis and, indeed, personal tragedy for many, in this context a very amazing thing has happened — this province grew; our economy continued to expand; the economic base continued to be diversified; our most important services to the people continued to be delivered, and in some cases even expanded. This province grew.

A member of this Assembly was asked what would happen if the price for grain and the price for potash and the price for oil all went down at the same time. He was asked this at a time when the treasury was full and the government was buying up the very assets being the land bank with borrowed money; it was buying companies with more borrowed money; and it was buying uranium mines even with more borrowed money. And so the question was asked: what if the prices for all of those things fall at the same time? And the hon. gentleman replied that the idea was ridiculous; it was uncontrovertible. But he said, but if it were to happen, if in a million chances it really occurred, the result, he said, would be disastrous; it would be a disaster.

The gentleman that had that discussion, Mr. Speaker, was the past premier, the member for Elphinstone. And you know, Mr. Speaker, history has proved him right, at least in part. It was not such an unlikely event as he thought it would be, so in that he was not right, but he was right about the disaster. It has been a disaster. And the amazing thing, the truly incredible fact is that this government took that disaster and still made this province grow. And that very fact, Mr. Speaker, is the hardest evidence possible about the commitment of this government to the people of this province and to the future generations of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — The courage and the wisdom to take some hard decisions, the responsiveness to put it in place, and some of those difficult policies and the determination to preserve the protections afforded our people — these things, Mr. Speaker, are the marks of commitment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if any member of this House is not aware of the plight of farm families in this province, they ought to acquaint themselves of the facts very quickly. And when I began my remarks with a plea for respect for the people, I especially would ask those who wish to discuss the agriculture policy of the government, or the situation of farm families, to show some respect for those families.

It cannot be called respectful, Mr. Speaker, when some politician uses economic difficulties to terrorize people for purely political purposes. It is not respectful to pretend to care but to have no solutions or even suggestions. It is not respectful, Mr. Speaker, to be dishonest. I think of a person, Mr. Speaker, who has for the past number of weeks been saying at every opportunity that he will fight day and night for agriculture; a person has been saying that he would get on his knees for the farmers; a person who has been saying that he will spend the rest of his political life trying to save the family farm, and a person, Mr. Speaker, who in his report to his membership in his own political newspaper set out an agenda that did not once — not once, Mr. Speaker — mention farm families or agriculture — nothing at all.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this throne speech is certainly one that does not follow that kind of disrespectful course. Farm families are front and centre throughout the document, as it should be, and the government is to be commended for pursuing consistent and vigorous policies to come to the aid of farm families, both in domestic policies and of bringing all of its resources to bear on foreign governments, and even our own federal government when the need has been there. And that, Mr. Speaker, demonstrates unequivocally the commitment of this government.

Let me just remind members of the situation at the opening of the last session. The agricultural situation was at its worst; farm families were experiencing the height of the crisis. In that environment the throne speech was delivered, and the NDP critic for agriculture sat uncomfortably on his hands throughout the entire debate, and the Leader of the Opposition said not a word about possible solutions to the problems. The opposition ignored our most important industry and our most dramatic economic challenge.

(14:45)

And then, Mr. Speaker, we immediately had a budget debate. Again the NDP critic sat on his hands; again he was silent; and again, Mr. Speaker, the NDP had no options to offer, no alternatives to suggest, no policy — no policy on the most fundamental issue this province faces. And that is the kind of respect those people offer our farm families.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Well I hope they have changed their ways. I hope the ag critic across the floor does enter this debate this time, and I hope that he does have some alternatives to offer, and I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition will do more than condemn, criticize, and hearken back to the good old days when

price of wheat was high. I hope that the switching of seats has given him some ideas to offer farm families; that it was more than just a public relations act of musical chairs.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier of the market disruptions in resources. You will recall the dramatic and serious threat that was posed to our potash industry by the political machinations of a few potash companies in America. In a pre-election period for the United States, such threats are to be taken as most serious.

This government acted quickly, decisively, and with a degree of commitment that can only be characterized as impressive. Some were saying, don't interfere directly, take them to court, go the political process. Those were the alternatives offered by the member for Riversdale — take them to court, make more money for lawyers — that was the alternative. But the fact was, Mr. Speaker, that the people in the industry, the workers at Lanigan, at Patience Lake, at Cory, at Esterhazy, and all the other mine sites — these people could not wait for years, years that such a process would take. So the government did intervene directly, and the result was a solution, not over a period of years, but over a period of weeks. And that, Mr. Speaker, I submit to you, is commitment.

The potash crisis pointed up, as eloquently as anything could, the reliance we have on trade and the need to ensure trade peace with our major trading partner. It is a simple fact, Mr. Speaker, that if we did not have access to the U.S. market, our potash mines would close down, and the families that depend on the these mines would find themselves without sources of income that they've worked so hard for.

Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, whether the person is a member of the union or a management employee, if he or she works in the potash industry, free trade with the United States must be a fundamental objective. It has been seen, if nothing else, as a simple protection, a protection as basic as unemployment insurance, because without the trade, unemployment is a certainty.

We face a similar need for open and freed trade with the United States in every area of our economy, Mr. Speaker. And while I do not intend to make a trade speech here, if there is to be a line drawn in this House, then let that line be on the issue of free trade agreement with the Americans. That line, Mr. Speaker, has been drawn, and there is no room for points in between. It is black and white, no shades of grey. If you "ain't fer it, y'er agin it." It's that simple.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — And I make that point, Mr. Speaker, for the member of Assiniboia, because I'm not sure he has a full understanding of the issue. I did read that he said that he saw himself, and I quote, "the skunk at the garden party." Those are his words — the skunk at the garden party — when it comes to free trade with the Americans.

But, Mr. Speaker, he can come to the party in the garden, or he can head out to left field with other members of the opposition who oppose the agreement. What he cannot do, when his riding contains hundreds of farm families of

cattlemen and women, of people who rely for their daily bread upon trade with our neighbours to the South — what he cannot do, Mr. Speaker, is leave them without any representation on this vital issue. Obviously the garden party is going forward, and we'll be serving up Saskatchewan pork, Saskatchewan beef, and Saskatchewan bread, and we'll be burning Saskatchewan propane in Saskatchewan barbecues, and the invitations will go out with a Saskatchewan computer program on fine Saskatchewan paper.

And I just want that member to know that he is invited to join us at the party and celebrate the new deal for western Canada and the growth and prosperity that is in store for our particular province. And I would ask him: why not work for your constituents? Why not work for the people of Saskatchewan? Come on board!

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne also reaffirmed the government's policy of public participation and reviewed a bit how much has already been accomplished. Let me say how pleased I am that the Leader of the Opposition has indicated he can be supportive of our initiatives, including the direct privatization of Crowns.

It was with some surprise and great satisfaction that I listened to the member for Saskatoon Nutana, the critic for public participation — and I notice that I have her interest. I heard her state that the NDP was not opposed to Intercontinental Packers as the kind of privatization they agree with. She said, "The economic and social reasons for holding those shares were no longer there." Well I congratulate her and her leader for coming around, Mr. Speaker. I hope that as they see the facts they will realize that the course the government is taking is precisely the course that they have prescribed.

I also expect that the member for Saskatoon University would be well pleased at the announcement that the province will no longer own the uranium mines, Mr. Speaker. And I say this because when his government was considering buying into those mines, he made some very eloquent arguments against government ownership at the time. He argued, quite correctly, that the price of uranium fluctuates, and if the government bought up all those mines, well when there was a downturn in the world market, the public would be left holding the bag. History proved him right. And from his example we are pursuing the advice that he offered his own NDP government, the advice to say out of the ownership business.

Well, Mr. Speaker, these are just a couple of examples of how we can be united in this Assembly in public participation undertakings, because the prospects for economic development and diversification, for direct public input, for enhanced public accountability through a genuine relationship of regulator to producer, for expanded competitiveness and greater innovation, for better employee morale through ownership, and for the many other proven benefits — these prospects, Mr. Speaker, are simply awesome.

I had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to speak to some employees of SaskCOMP — obviously I can't identify

them, but it was a group of three — and they told me, Mr. Speaker, that they were very excited at the prospect of their firm going private. They were very eager — eager for a public share offering so that they could become a direct part of the company. And in fact the one fellow said that he would be willing to go out and borrow money so that he would be able to purchase shares.

These three people — and they were not management — no, no — these three employees are convinced that once they are freed from the constraints of government ownership, that they will be one of the top companies in North America.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — And, Mr. Speaker, do you know what? They directly addressed the link to the free trade agreement, saying that they believe SaskCOMP could compete with the best of them in the U.S. market.

Now I'm not an expert in the computer field or computers or computer services, Mr. Speaker, but I have to take the word of the three people so directly and personally affected by the policy. And quite simply, they loved it. That is what public participation is all about. It is about reinvigorating the employees, empowering them, if you will, to affect the creativity and direction of their firm. It is about energizing the economy with a whole new set of shareholders eager to take on the future. It is about providing the trigger for the biggest vision and the greatest horizons of opportunity for all of our people. And that, in a phrase, Mr. Speaker, is what public participation is all about — three greatest horizons of opportunity. And I want to say how proud I am to be part of that process.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech laid out in some detail part of this government's agenda of commitment to education in this province. Now I will not repeat every initiative announced in His Honour's remarks, but I do think that a few of his remarks bear recording and restating.

The last session of this Assembly witnessed one of the most significant undertakings in the province's education history. The crafting of a unique comprehensive technical and regional college system that will serve with excellence every corner of this province has to be greeted with optimism and pride, Mr. Speaker. We will not only have quality education in Regina and in Saskatoon, we will have it available in our rural communities. And ultimately, as the distance education policies develop and the resources needed are mustered, we will have the highest quality education, including university, available right in the homes, on the farms across Saskatchewan.

This province was also provided with a tool to enhance and modernize its basic education system with the introduction of the education development fund, a fund consisting of entirely new money, a fund that was never even considered a possibility by previous governments. And it is encouraging to see members opposite standing up to defend this PC initiative, and as I'm sure that we will see them do once more as they enter this debate.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is true — it is true that the fund has

been extended to ten years from five. It is not true, as some members across the floor have stated, that the education development fund has been cut. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, part of the rationale for the extended life of the EDF (education development fund). There was significant concern in some quarters that the fund intended — the developmental fund, and so named — that this fund should have a short planning horizon. Some people suggested that in the haste to put together eligible programs before the five years ran out, detailed consideration and planning would not be possible and the true developmental objectives of the fund would be impeded. A longer planning horizon is completely consistent and appropriate with the nature of the fund, and that should be clear to all.

(15:00)

What is more, Mr. Speaker, it is true that the extension is consistent with the fiscal necessities of the province of Saskatchewan, and I think it is silly to expect an apology for that.

The fact is that under intense financial pressure we did not do as the NDP did with their program of nursing homes. As an example, we did not put a moratorium on the fund and effectively cut it off. What the government did was to look at the base objectives of the fund and see how those objectives could be consistently met within the financial realities of the day.

And, Mr. Speaker, I say congratulations to the Minister of Education for his clear and unequivocal demonstration of commitment to education. I say congratulations to the government that had the innovation and the will to come up with such a fund in the first place. And I ask members opposite who are so doggedly defending this government's EDF initiative: where was it when you held power — where was it when you held power? As with nursing homes and hospitals and schools, it was all the same.

The NDP member for Elphinstone put it succinctly when he answered a question about government revenues and said, I quote: "the purpose was to take money and invest it." Like Saskoil, in potash, in uranium mines. It was not the belief that the money would be there in cash to build hospitals or nursing homes or schools, for that matter, Mr. Speaker. And that is what they did when they had money. They didn't build schools or hospitals or nursing homes. Instead, they bought potash mines.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has a different approach, an approach to the commitment to the people, commitment to the future of our children. And in the toughest physical circumstances possible, it has built schools; it has created a development fund; it has created a world-class technical education system, and it has created a new and modern core curriculum. And the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, has indicated how that agenda of commitment will be continued to be built upon.

Now the members opposite like to get into the collective bargaining process wherever possible, and that is something I don't think that politicians should do. But

without addressing the issues of the teacher bargaining situation, I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to come clean with the teachers of this province and the people of the province. It's all find and good to say that teacher should have an increase in their salary, but tell us how much. tell us how much you, as premier, would be prepared to give; or should I say, as he's apparent, are prepared to promise.

And while he is at it, Mr. Speaker, I want to know from him, how much? Twenty per cent? Thirty per cent? How much are you promising? How much are you prepared to give the workers as SaskPower? How much is he promising nurses, doctors, third-party organizations, and his friends, the union bosses? Because you know, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member likes to talk about my friends in the business community, and I assure him that I continue to value those friendships, but he's amazingly reluctant to discuss his friends among the union bosses.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that here we have a clear case of conflict of interest. And I say to those people across the floor, you're job is to stay out of the collective bargaining process and not to foment it into strife. And if you're going to promise more of everything to everyone, then you have a clear obligation to tell the people exactly how much more is it that you are promising, and where is that money going to come from.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Because, Mr. Speaker, while there are basically an unlimited number of worthwhile and worthy demands for more money, there is not an unlimited supply of money. And that simple fact means governments must achieve a fair balance between the competing demands and needs of all groups in society, even recognizing that a great many of those demands are indeed worthy ones.

And in closing that subject, Mr. Speaker, just let me say that as a teacher I greatly sympathize with our educators. And of course I support a fair compensation package, but it is the nature of collective bargaining to decide what is fair through bargaining, and accounting the constraints each side faces. It is not in the nature of collective bargaining to use political pressure to obtain your ends. And that, I suggest, is an abuse of the process, and one that is unavailable to all except public employees.

I am completely confident that a satisfactory resolution will be arrived at by the two sides, and again we can get on with the business of rebuilding the education system that the NDP allowed to so seriously decay.

Let me turn now, Mr. Speaker, to an issue of fundamental importance, an issue of a special significance to me — health care. In welcoming the Leader of the Opposition into his new seat, I want to thank him for the recognition he has given in the past to the great difficulties governments face in the health care cost crisis.

I was especially impressed, Mr. Speaker, when the gentleman spoke to the Canadian Hospital Association in Toronto in 1985. The PC Party was the government at the

time in Saskatchewan, and the Leader of the Opposition had some advice to offer our government. Firstly, he noted that he had studied the issue and had come to a profound conclusion — and let me just quote the member for Riversdale verbatim — and I quote:

Underfunding in the sense of failure to fund efficacious treatment has not been substantiated. In deed, there is the evidence of significant remaining inefficient and ineffective care, suggesting that the underfunding, privatization argument is primarily aimed at increasing physicians' incomes and expanding their access to publicly funded capital equipment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, while I do not entirely agree with the NDP leader's remarks about doctors, I am pleased that he was honest enough to announce that this government was not underfunding medicare. In fact, Mr. Speaker, at the same convention the Leader of the Opposition recognized the cost crisis and described it as such. His first solution was to quit building hospitals and other health care facilities. And a second solution was to impose a rationing system for medical technology. And perhaps, Mr. Speaker, that entire speech should be tabled so that his caucus could illuminate themselves on the serious challenges that we face.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, this government does not agree with the NDP solution of refusing to build hospitals, and our program of hospital construction has been the largest in history. For example, Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon still has the City Hospital on stream, and I am sure that the people of Saskatoon Eastview would not want us to accept the NDP leader's stated policy and cancel the construction of that hospital.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I must say that, in government or out, I will fight before I allow some politician to be the decisive voice whether or my father or my mother or my children will have access to life-saving medical technology. These are the NDP solutions of the state abdicating responsibility for providing fundamental services but imposing its will, rationing what is, in the end, life itself.

So I strongly oppose him on his medicare policies, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I commend him on recognizing the problem. I hope that when the task force is established and going through its hearings, he will bring policies forward to it and see if maybe he can be convinced to modify them to support the more moderate stand of our government, because we oppose those kinds of NDP solutions. And let no one forget that they had an opportunity to impose them once, and impose them they did with their moratorium on nursing homes.

Because we oppose them, we have been able to maintain the highest standard of health care anywhere. At the same time we have been under tremendous pressure as a province and a people to cope with the escalating costs. The old structures and old principles introduced by the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues failed to take account of the ultimate impact, and more of the same old tired solutions won't cut it today.

So let me thank the government, and let me particularly express to the Premier my support for his Minister of Health. I am grateful for the courage that this government has had on those many issues. I am grateful for the single-mindedness with which they have pursued the only course which will ensure the survival of quality care for all of our citizens without such Draconian measures as closing hospitals and refusing people access to medical technology.

And I congratulate the government for going to the people to seek new and innovative solutions to the crisis through the task force that has just been announced. Mr. Speaker, we are on the threshold of many very exciting and rewarding opportunities.

Oh, there's no question we have many, many challenges ahead of us. But the throne speech was accurate when it says that we can look with optimism and strength toward those challenges after having come out of such a struggle as we have just experienced. We can look forward to renewal and growth, to expanded trade and prosperity, to the most dynamic education and health systems in the country. The only one thing, Mr. Speaker, that we need is the continued commitment of our people, the best people on earth.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm deeply proud to be a member of this caucus. The men and the women I sit with are reflective of the people of our Saskatchewan. They have deep compassion for their fellow man. They are proud of hard work, and work hard to justify the pride of their people. They are innovators and doers. They are dedicated, enthusiastic and prepared to sacrifice much so that their community will be better than it was. These people, Mr. Speaker, these people are the people of Saskatchewan — not the pessimists, the whiners, the habitual critics with little moral fibre. That is not Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And yes, these people are people of moral convictions without apology — people who believe in the great traditions of this province, people who believe in the family and in the inherent value of life, people who have a strong and enduring connection to the land from which our spirits arise and grow.

(15:15)

And, Mr. Speaker, with pride in this people, with pride in the people of my province, and as a loyal servant of my monarch, I move, and seconded by the member for Moosomin:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan as follows:

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We, as members of the Legislative Assembly, are gathered here today to open a new session of the legislature. Today marks the start of another chapter in the ongoing history of Saskatchewan. As this legislative session begins, we have the same confidence in the future of our province that our pioneer forefathers did.

The Speech from the Throne symbolizes the commitment of the government to keep on building Saskatchewan as we head into the last decade of this century. As an individual member of this Legislative Assembly, I am honoured today to second the motion in support of the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, these are not ordinary times in the history of Saskatchewan. These are times that require leadership and vision. And I can say with confidence and pride that the Speech from the Throne is representative of the leadership and vision of the Premier of Saskatchewan and the government that he leads in this Assembly.

As we begin the second session of the twenty-first legislature, I wish to express my high regard and confidence in the leadership of the Premier of Saskatchewan. The Premier of our province is truly a leader. He has the courage and the wisdom to be a strong defender of the family and traditional values. Our Premier is a man of solid moral fibre who has the conviction to do what is right. Saskatchewan can be proud that we have a Premier of such nationally respected stature who is known for his leadership in building Saskatchewan. That leadership, Mr. Speaker, is demonstrated in the Speech from the Throne.

The Speech from the Throne contains the agenda for the Government of Saskatchewan in the months and years ahead. It shows leadership and economic development, agriculture, education, health care, and other policies that are of vital importance to the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, on a day like today I feel it is a time for all of us to reflect on the future of our fair province — where we are, where we have been, and where we are going.

The Progressive Conservative government of this province believes that our greatest days are ahead. Saskatchewan has achieved greatness as a province, but ahead of us lies the opportunity to be a shining star in confederation.

The people of this province have always been our greatest resource. The people of Saskatchewan have a great affinity for this province. Like their government, the people of Saskatchewan believe in the great potential of our province. That belief and confidence is expressed in the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, this spring will mark six years since that historic day in April of 1982 when the people of Saskatchewan elected a Progressive Conservative government. Since that time they have renewed their

confidence in this government. The Speech from the Throne reaffirms a special bond between the people and their government.

In the Speech from the Throne, it was stated that this government remains firmly committed to the belief that no institutions is more important than the family. Mr. Speaker, the pioneer families were the original founders of what we proudly call Saskatchewan. No institution can ever substitute for the family. Every family in this province can take hear that this government recognizes the value of the family. Mr. Speaker, I believe that strong families mean a strong wholesome society.

This government is proud of its record of programs to protect the family, and in future, government programs will continue to meet the changing needs of a family life. To meet the changing needs of our society, this government recognizes there are important issues that must be addressed. The Speech from the throne addresses those important issues facing we, the people of Saskatchewan.

I agree with the Speech from the Throne. Agriculture remains the backbone of Saskatchewan. Agriculture is the mainstay of our economy. Nobody understands farming more than the Premier of our province who serves as the Minister of Agriculture. All of us in this Assembly recognize how difficult the past couple of years have been for farmers. International subsidies, depressed grain prices, and protectionism have all hurt the farming community.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a record of programs for the protection of farmers, and agriculture will remain on top of the priority list. The throne speech expresses the government's commitment to the protection of those who live in rural Saskatchewan. The rural way of life in this province will be preserved, and that means greater protection for rural families when times are difficult. Our past record is an excellent indicator of our future commitment to farmers. Mr. Speaker, this government has spared no effort to help the agricultural sector. We will continue to build, diversity, and strengthen the farming community. In the past, farmers knew they could count on this government, and the Speech from the Throne is a pledge that then can count on us in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to now turn to another priority of Saskatchewan people — good, quality health care. We in Saskatchewan are proud of the fact that our province was the first in Canada to establish medicare. There was a special pride in our province in the heritage of people like Tommy Douglas and John George Diefenbaker who put politics aside to work together to give us medicare. Let there be no doubt about it, good, quality and first class health care is priority of this government and the people of this province.

Since this government came into effect in office in 1982, health care spending has increased by historic leaps and bounds. Since 1982, health care spending in our province has increased by 63 per cent. Last year alone the \$1.2 billion health care budget was the highest in the province's history and the second largest per capita in all of Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, prior to 1982 Chief Justice Emmett Hall's medicare report found that this province had a health care system that was the third worst in all of Canada. It had been neglected. This government corrected the situation. We set out to build a health care system to where today it is considered to be one of the best in North America. You will recall that prior to 1982 there was extra billing for health care. Those people who could not afford it, especially senior citizens, had to pay extra dollars out of their own pocket for certain health care procedures. The previous administration refused to take off extra billing. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was this government, a Progressive Conservative government, that removed extra billing on health care, and we are proud of that fact.

I should like to remind this Assembly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that from 1976 to 1982 there was a total lack of nursing home construction. A freeze had been put on nursing home construction. To correct that neglect, it was this Progressive Conservative government that has since 1982 approved for construction about 2,000 special care home beds in this province. Our commitment to health care is genuine and has been stated in the Speech from the Throne.

With respect to health care, this Speech from the Throne states a commitment to the fact that Saskatchewan has a first-rate health care system. In the past, we have invested over one-third of the provincial budget each year since 1982 to building the health care system that we have today.

That has meant a 157 per cent increase for ambulance services and 90 per cent increase in funding for alcohol and drug abuse. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognize that alcohol and drug abuse are a threat to the stability of family life. The new \$1.5 million youth drug and alcohol treatment centre at Whitespruce is the first of its kind in all of Canada. Not only has this government said no to drugs, we have made a commitment to protect families and help those who need help, through modern and compassionate programs.

I wish to reaffirm the commitment of this government to meet the changing health needs of our province and our goal to ensure that Saskatchewan continues to have the best health care system in all of Canada. Mr. Deputy Speaker, while a healthy public is important to this government, so is a healthy economy.

The Speech from the Throne states a number of solid fiscal and economic policies to build and diversify the economy of Saskatchewan. The free trade agreement between Canada and the United States is going to be a great boost to Saskatchewan's economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are a trading province. One in five jobs in this province depends on trade. We in Saskatchewan are Canada's largest per capita traders with the Americans. Our Premier is one of the strongest supporters of free trade because he has seen the vision that free trade will mean increased prosperity for all of us in this province. The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement was signed on January 2, 1988, and I am confident that it

will present many positive benefits to the people of this province. The free trade agreement is good for Canada, and it is good for Saskatchewan.

This historic free trade agreement will complement the plans of Saskatchewan's government to diversify our economy. Increased markets for Saskatchewan's products will mean more jobs. More jobs will be created in the agricultural, manufacturing, and resource sectors, and our ability to expand to a larger market will make Saskatchewan a more competitive and viable province in the Canadian confederation. In this session of the legislature, this government will reaffirm our belief in free trade. Free trade provides Saskatchewan and western Canada the opportunity to be on a solid economic footing in confederation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Speech from the Throne states that this government believes our future prosperity depends on trade. Trade is a very important contributor to our very standard of living. Access to the markets is critical for our province. The United States is the destination of approximately 40 per cent of all Saskatchewan exports. Free trade means a brighter and better future for our province and for our young people.

(15:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier of Saskatchewan has become recognized all over Canada and the United States as a leader in the efforts to make free trade a reality. For the record, I wish to commend the Premier for his leadership role in bringing about the free trade agreement. All of us in Saskatchewan are winners because of the free trade agreement. Free trade is part of a plan to build and diversify the Saskatchewan economy. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so is public participation.

The Speech from the Throne says that this government believes that all Saskatchewan people have a right to the opportunity of participating in the province's economic growth. That is the corner-stone of public participation.

As stated in the Speech from the Throne, our province is about to embark on a full-scale program of public participation. Legislation will be introduced to create a new Department of Public Participation. I wish to state for the record that public participation is a method of getting the government either fully or partly out of commercial activities.

It is very important to this government that all Saskatchewan people have the opportunity to invest or participate in the economy. The public participation process will help to build our economy. Mr. Deputy Speaker, public participation will give all employees in government commercial services a chance to run their own economies. At the same time, every Saskatchewan citizen will have the opportunity to buy shares as they did with Saskatchewan Power bonds. Public participation will contribute to the government's plan of economic diversification. Saskatchewan will become the first jurisdiction in North America to establish a Department of Public Participation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I commend the government for its

leadership in developing a program of public participation that will be launched in this session of the legislature.

Building a strong economy for Saskatchewan is an ongoing priority of this government. As we open this session of the legislature, I am pleased to not recent Canadian press reports which indicate Saskatchewan's economy is growing. Economists are of the opinion that Saskatchewan's economy is showing good signs and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, economic diversification is part of the reason why our economy is growing.

The phrase "economic diversification" is not some mysterious 50-cent term used by financiers and economists. Economic diversification is a way to shape Saskatchewan's economy so that all of us will prosper in the years ahead.

This government has a plan of economic diversification. In building a new economic future for our province, there are new projects under way to expand our economy. These economic diversification projects include the construction of Canada's first heavy oil upgrader here in the city of Regina, a new paper mill at Prince Albert, a new processing plant in North Battleford. These are examples of what the Saskatchewan Builds program is all about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, economic diversification will create new investment, new jobs, and new prosperity. With all the rapid changes in technology, our education system must keep up with the times. A Progressive Conservative government in this province has, since 1982, increased funding for education in a significant way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me give the Assembly some examples. Since 1982 government grants to school boards have gone up by 56.8 per cent. At the same time there has been an increase of 60 per cent in total grants per pupil, while the actual cost per pupil went up 34 per cent.

This government believes we can build the future of Saskatchewan through diversifying our economy. In building Saskatchewan for the future, we must look upon education as an investment. Public education is a good investment indeed. This government believes that the training of minds is very important to the future prosperity of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne notes the value of education. The young people of Saskatchewan represent our future. They must be given every opportunity to develop their potential. Our education system can build character, skills, and abilities that will ensure that our youth can take advantage of opportunities in the Saskatchewan of tomorrow.

This government has increased education funding, yet I am pleased to report that Saskatchewan ratepayers have, on average, enjoyed a significant reduction in the education portion of their tax bill. Government funding to our K to 12 and post-secondary system has increased by almost 260 million, or 48 per cent since 1982.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan's education system is one of the best in Canada. We are building an education system that can and will meet the rapidly changing needs of society. As we look to the 1990s, we must provide our young people with a first-class education to prepare them for the work place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this session of the legislature we will continue to address the needs of our education system. The commitment to education is part of this government's plan to diversify the economy.

Tourism is an example of that. Your government has established a tourism and hospitality institute. This institute will educate people to fill new jobs in the tourism industry. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you stop and consider that tourism generates over \$320 million in revenue each year in Saskatchewan, you can see why tourism education is important. This is just one example of how our education system must keep right up to speed with changes in our economy.

Technology, such as the computer industry, has meant many new jobs that did not exist 10 years ago. In fact, Saskatoon has become one of the leading high-tech cities in all of Canada. Time and time again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Premier has expressed a commitment to quality education. Our reforms in education will mean a brighter future for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hallmark of Saskatchewan's Progressive Conservative government is leadership. Leadership means a respect for traditions, an understanding of the present, and a vision of the future. Leadership means commitment to the people and not special interest groups. Leadership means having the courage to do what is right. The Premier and the Government of Saskatchewan provide effective and strong leadership. The Speech from the Throne is a reflection of that leadership. This government has shown leadership and support of free trade, and again the quality of leadership was demonstrated in this government's protection and programs for farmers.

I could cite examples of leadership in the Progressive Conservative government's policies and programs in health care and education, and in two elections, in every city, town, village, and rural municipality the people of Saskatchewan have joined together to give this government a mandate to govern, a mandate to keep on building Saskatchewan.

Today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in opening this session of the legislature, we continue to agenda of the government. And I say with pride that much will be accomplished in this legislative session because of the contents of the Speech from the Throne.

Caring and compassion, a sense of fairness, protection of people — they are all part of this government's commitment to people. The school teacher in Davidson, the mechanic in Prince Albert, the home-maker in Maple Creek, the farmer near Swift Current, the student in Saskatoon, the senior in Tisdale, and people from all walks of life can count on this government to do what is right for Saskatchewan.

Ultimately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people choose governments, and this government intends to listen to the people. The Speech from the Throne contains many policies and programs that resulted from the wishes of the people.

People tell us that the Saskatchewan Pension Plan is excellent. The Saskatchewan Pension Plan, the first of its kind in North America, was implemented by this government as a result of consultation with the people of this province. Keeping in touch with the people is important to this Progressive Conservative government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we begin this new session of the legislature, I would like to urge all members of this Assembly to remember the sacred trust all of us have with those who elected us. All over North America the public is getting disgusted with catcalling, juvenile behaviour, lack of decorum, and other antics that give those of us in public life a bad name. May I remind the members of the Assembly, our province has produced great Canadian parliamentarians like Tommy Douglas and John Diefenbaker. I would respectfully suggest that in this session of the Legislative Assembly all of us set a fine example of excellence in our legislative conduct. This example would do honour to our Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it is always a distinct personal honour for any member of the legislature to have the opportunity to second the Speech from the Throne. I wish to express to the Premier and this Assembly my feeling of pride in supporting the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is on the threshold on a new era, then it's history. Gone are the days of state ownership, state control, and state socialism. Today we are in a time of economic opportunity — free enterprise and government as a servant, not the master. We live in an exciting time in Saskatchewan's history. Mr. Speaker, I welcome all the members of this Assembly to this session. Let us get on with the business of this province. And in closing I am proud to second the motion in support of the Speech from the Throne.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure, I think, and I'll tell you why I say I think, to enter into this debate on the Speech from the Throne. The pleasure is because it's a great honour to be elected to the Legislative Assembly in Saskatchewan, for that matter to any Legislative Assembly, and have the opportunity to discuss the important issues of the day. And to that extent it's a pleasure and an honour.

And I must say also, if I might for the moment to make a personal comment, for me it's a great pleasure and honour, although somewhat intimidating, to rise in this debate on the Speech from the throne for the first time as the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, people say, well you have big shoes to fill, referring to the member from Regina Elphinstone, Mr. Blakeney. My answer is

very simple: I can't fill his shoes; I just simply have my own. And with the co-operation of my caucus colleagues and the determination of my party and the support and the advice of the people of the province of Saskatchewan, I am determined — I'll scratch the words "I'm determined" — we're determined, Mr. Speaker, to present the most effective form of opposition, and positive, constructive proposals that any opposition party can give in this legislature and for the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Now normally that job would be made a little bit easier if we had a Speech from the Throne which would provide for the opposition some meat over which to chew, and to debate, and to engage the government into differences over ideology, or program, or policies.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, that even you would agree with me that yesterday's Speech from the Throne surely must go down in Saskatchewan history as one of the most lack-lustre, one of the most visionless — if there is such a word — purposeless speeches that I have ever heard in the province's — well certainly the years that I've been around in provincial political activity.

(15:45)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, here we have a crisis of immense proportions in Saskatchewan, by the government's own admission. We have farmers facing bankruptcy and facing the difficulties that they have over the last few years; farmers who worry whether or not they are going to be able to get the spring crop in, and if they do this year, what the situation is going to look like at harvest time or next spring.

We have more unemployed in the province of Saskatchewan today than we've had in recent years. We've had young people who are now entering their last weeks and days of school, looking for graduation, and now looking for jobs — anxiously looking for jobs. And this process for young people has not just begun. It's been going for the last several weeks, and no jobs to be found.

We see families at all stages — whether it's in the cities or in the farms — under tremendous stress financially, and under tremendous stress personally and emotionally as they see loved ones, sons and daughters, being forced to vacate the province as they see themselves struggling for survival with respect to the family farms, worried about whether or not that job is going to continue tomorrow or next month. In the midst of all of this crisis, Mr. Speaker, this government comes out with a Speech from the Throne which gives them no hope, no guidance, no vision. It is surely one of the most purposeless speeches ever in the history of the province of Saskatchewan, and this government should be condemned for that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — To be sure, there is a litany of excuses.

In the Speech from the throne the government blames everybody. There's a world crisis on its hands, they say, that they can't manage. To be fair, there are certain factors in the world which are obviously affecting the economic and social problems of all governments, including this one; one has to acknowledge that.

But to hang all of the excuses for this government's inactivity, to try to blame away or to excuse away this government's contradictory and confusing policies — whether they're on social-style issues, life-style issues or whether they're on economic policy issues — to try to escape anything and everything, and to blame it exclusively on the world-dimension problems, Mr. Speaker, flies in the face of the fact that that is a government in control of the treasury, that is a government that has the power and the capacity to legislate, that is a government that can do something for ordinary people on the farms and the cities. But it's also a fact that that's a government that has refused to help the farmers and the working people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, what is the reason for this government's bankruptcy of ideas — a bankruptcy of ideas which matches, in fact I would say even exceeds, the bankruptcy of the provincial treasury thanks to six years of mismanagement by the gentlemen and the ladies opposite. What is the excuse for this bankruptcy of ideas? What is the explanation for this morass, this state of despair and hopelessness that the current administration in Regina has placed us in?

I think, Mr. Speaker, that one can blame a lot of it on ideology. In my judgement most of it is ideological because this government wants to turn the clock back to another era in Saskatchewan's history. It wants to turn the clock back to the good old days prior to the Great Depression, just prior to the Great Depression. It wants to turn back the policies and the programs to some sort of notion of private enterprise and freedom and individual initiative, as they describe it, which of course is a double standard. There's freedom and there's private initiative if you've got the money and if you've got the position, but for everybody else of course there's misery and no jobs and no hope in security.

They want to turn back the ideological clock to a time which we had once before in the province of Saskatchewan under the Anderson administration, the PC Anderson administration, in those values they are a backward-looking government who, I believe, in those same identical ideals and values, exactly the same ones.

They're the ones who believe in the forces of the market-place. It is the same people who say that the free trade deal with the United States linking ourselves irrevocably with a country, the one country which is exclusively market driven, it is these people who say that the forces of market will decide and will improve the lot. The same thing as Anderson and the PCs of the 1930s did.

It is these people who say that the outside companies, the Weyerhaeusers and the Pocklingtons and all of the big

multinational corporations with whom they hob-nob, but the small-business people with whom they ignore and have forgotten, it's the same people who say that the Weyerhaeusers and the Pocklingtons will provide jobs for our young men and women. The same things as the Andersons and the PCs.

Mr. Speaker, this government is bankrupt of ideas. It is flat busted of ideas because the ideas that they got are bankrupt ideas and they have been proven to be bankrupt ideas in the 1930s.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — And there's more than just simply being old ideas, old bankrupt ideas which are now being rejected virtually everywhere in the free world — all of the Reaganism which is passing, the Thatcherism which is passing. I mean, here's a government, Mr. Speaker, if you can imagine, who's on a kick of privatization, or as my colleague from Moose Jaw describes it so accurately, not privatization, but piratization.

This is a political party which says that it's a Saskatchewan political party. This government opposite says that it's a government of and for the people of Saskatchewan. And who do they bring in to tell them about piratization and privatization — a whole slug of advisers from the United Kingdom, from everywhere but Saskatchewan or Canada, to dismantle piece by piece, and sometimes not piece by piece, in a wholesale destruction of the very infrastructure that has built up this great province that we have in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, we have a Premier of the province of Saskatchewan, there's no doubt about that, at least in name. Well let's make no mistake about it — the real premier of Saskatchewan is a man called Oliver Letwin, and he's from the United Kingdom and he wants to destroy Saskatchewan by privatization. That's the real premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — So the bankruptcy of ideas is explained because the ideology has been proven to be old, to be out of touch. It never worked; it led to the Great Depression of the great 1930s, the Great Depression which caused so much misery.

It's a kind of an ideology and philosophy which we're seeing now in the United States, and we're seeing here in Canada, being so zealously advocated by these zealots opposite, which has proven to create mercenary policies, and also proven to show that there is nothing but difficulties attached to the local people of this province of Saskatchewan. That is the advocacy of the old; that's why that Speech from the Throne was so barren of ideas.

But there's another reason why it was barren of ideas too, Mr. Speaker. It was barren because not only is the ideology old, but this government is old and it's tired and it's given up. It has no vision. It can't govern, Mr. Speaker, and it must go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — It's a government, Mr. Speaker, with no vitality. They've been in office for six years and they have been seduced by the powers and by the privileges of power. They have been so seduced by their big, large corporation friends that they think actually that they're going to be there for ever.

That they're so confident in their world travel. I mean, the Premier travels all over the world, as the last speaker tells us about, in support of free trade. Everywhere he travels. It's to a Washington prayer breakfast, it's to Washington again, it's over to North Dakota. The Minister of Economic Development, he travels over to Argentina.

I have nothing against the travel in the interests of the province of Saskatchewan. Nobody can complain about that, except that this government is more concerned about problems over which it can do nothing, and it's forgotten about those problems and needs right here at home.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — They don't see any merit in a government going around to the English to tell us how to set up a privatized society in London, England. Sure it's the Mother of Parliaments, but I don't think that there's very much that England can tell us about how to build a democracy. I don't think there's very much that Oliver Letwin, the shadow premier of this government, can tell us about how to build a mixed economy which heretofore has been healthy and based on positive developments by the private sector and the co-operative sector and by the government sector — not one iota.

I'm actually ashamed to think that this Premier and this government is so bereft and so bankrupt of ideas that it has to rely on these kinds of authorities who apply solutions that might work — I underline the word — might work in the United Kingdom, apply the solutions in a far-away land, for far-away circumstances, that they have to depend upon these people to bring down the very infrastructure that our pioneers and our fathers and forefathers built. And we're not going to stand for it, Mr. Speaker, in opposition — not at all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — So, Mr. Speaker, it is an old government. It's an old government; it's old ideologically; it's an old Herbert Hoover-style government with the same rhetoric and the same kind of talk and the same kind of phraseology. It's an old ideology which hasn't worked, and it's an old, tired government which, in its pursuit of these fanciful ideas, has forgotten the people at home. It's forgotten the farmers at home. It's forgotten the 11,000 people who wait to get into a hospital bed in Saskatoon city — 11,000 nothing for them. It's forgotten about the 5,000 who try to get into a hospital bed in Saskatoon, forgotten about the families here in Saskatchewan and in Regina and Saskatoon. It has bigger fish to fry.

Well I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when and if the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan ever gets the courage to call by-elections in Eastview and Elphinstone, he's going to be taught a lesson that the people of this province want the Premier of this province to tend to the knitting of Saskatchewan's business, and not to be travelling the world over in pursuit of fanciful and pipe dreams.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — So, Mr. Speaker, we have a Speech from the Throne which is old and busted of ideas as I've described it; a Speech from the Throne which concentrates on the problem of mad dogs travelling through the . . . in roaming packs through the cities of Saskatchewan; tells us about what it's going to do about the Jury Act, as important as it is, while in the meantime farmers and business people . . . By the way, hardly a word spoken about the small-business people in that Speech from the Throne.

An Hon. Members: — Nothing, not one word.

Mr. Romanow: — In fact my colleague says, not one word, and I think that's probably true — not one word, and that's what I'm hearing everywhere that I travel, speaking to small-business people. Tonight I'm going to be speaking to the medical society and to business people later on this evening. That's the message they've been telling me before. They'll tell me again. This government has forgotten it.

But I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, there's another dimension to the state of this government currently. And that is that it simply can't be believed any more in its pronouncements.

An Hon. Member: — Dishonest.

Mr. Romanow: — The word is used, "dishonest." That's perhaps a little bit too harsh to use, but I'll use it in the context of political dishonesty, Mr. Speaker. There used to be a time in Saskatchewan politics when a leader, a premier, or a minister of the government, said what he or she meant and meant what was said. When a political leader makes a promise in an election or in the legislature, that was a bond with the people of the province, the voters. This government can't be believed any more.

One could deliver a speech for the balance of the afternoon, Mr. Speaker, to make my point. I start with the budget before October of 1986 — the Premier will know all about that — where the estimate was . . . and by the way, I almost shudder to think when I use the words "of a deficit of only \$400 million approximately," — only \$400 millions, and it turns out to be \$1.2 billion.

Mr. Speaker, one of two things you would have us to believe: either they didn't know the size of the deficit, in which case they are the worst managers in the history of the province of Saskatchewan; or, Mr. Speaker, they knew full well what the deficit was but they were covering up from the people of the province of Saskatchewan or, putting it in plain old-fashioned English, they were dishonest with the people of the

province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Political dishonesty, Mr. Speaker, political dishonesty. This is not a minor error or even an error that can be accounted for by way of some fluctuation of an economic indicator, that kind of a budgetary mistake. This is a massive difference between the prediction and the reality which clearly was advanced because they know — the Premier knew, the Minister of Finance knew — that if the people of this province knew how badly bankrupt this province was, thanks to their administration, they would have lost the election on October of 1986. And that's dishonesty, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, and there's a litany of that.

How about the promise to reduce provincial income tax by 10 per cent, I ask the government benches over there. What happened to that promise — broken. What about the promise to eliminate the gas tax, Mr. Speaker — promise broken. And by the way, to eliminate it for good is the word. What about the promise to eliminate the province sales tax? That's gone up from 5 to 7 per cent. What about the promise never to attack medicare, Mr. Speaker, never to attack medicare and hospitalization? And I just want to say a word about that before I adjourn my remarks — adjourn the debate and continue tomorrow.

(16:00)

I want to say about medicare, after six years of administration by the PC government, Mr. Speaker, we have this sorry record in health: 11,000 people waiting to get into a hospital bed; we've got a pharmacare program which has been gutted; we've got a children's dental program which has been dismantled and the substitute program is nowhere around to be seen; we have doctors in revolution, almost, against this government's approach; we have nurses who are understaffed and overworked and they're tired and they're harassed and nobody listens to them, nobody over there listens to them. They're pleading for some additional assistance. We have a mess on our hands in the health care system, Mr. Speaker, purposefully and deliberately visited upon the people of the province by these antediluvian, 1930s free enterprise ethics advanced by the Premier and the members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — After five years of putting this situation in a precarious situation, all of a sudden the Premier and the government gets up and they announce in the Speech from the Throne yesterday, they got a brand new idea — they're going to announce a task force to study health care after having taken a big chunk out of health care. After having gone a long way to dismantling this infrastructure which was built on civility and decency and humanity and on common sense, the government now says it's going to establish a task force on medicare and on hospitalization.

I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that that's like shutting the barn

door after all the horses or cows have left. That's like saying we're going to do something with medicare after we've hobbled it so badly that we have to have some new ideas, some new approaches for repair. That's not the direction they're going, Mr. Speaker. I tell you that this government's refusal to deny that this task force is going to be a cover for the establishment of a full-scale program for privatization of health care, or even the imposition of deterrent fees, stands as a further condemnation of this administration, and the people will not accept it; they want to reject it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'll have much more to say on this Speech from the Throne tomorrow, but I want to close by saying again, my opening them.

This is a government by any objective observation, whether it's by the journalists who cover the proceedings in the legislature, whether it's those who watch — and I tell you by those in the back benches sitting behind the Premier supporting this fragile government — anybody who watches objectively knows the true state of affairs. The true state of affairs is that this government practises an ideology which is out of date and full of double standard. This government has grossly mismanaged the fiscal records and the fiscal position of the province of Saskatchewan. This government has lost touch with the people of the province. It's prepared to travel anywhere and everywhere, almost exclusively not paying attention to Saskatchewan business and to Saskatchewan people.

And one last point before I take my place. It's a government which has betrayed this notion, which I never believed in in any event, this notion which it tried to propagate that somehow it was a political party of Saskatchewan, for Saskatchewan.

And I want to cite this one example, and that's the production loan — the \$25 per acre production loan. Mr. Speaker, in 1985 the Premier said that the fiscal position of farmers was so serious that 6 per cent money at \$25 per acre should be made available to farmers — promissory note, no security note. In 1988, when the farm crisis is worsened — greatly worsened — we now have a 10-year security, with an interest rate going up from 6 per cent to nine and three-quarters per cent. And the Premier has done this without any consultation with farm organizations — he's done it with absolutely no consultation with individual farmers, and he has put the farmers yet even deeper in debt and deeper into a crisis situation.

But look at the double standard by these free enterprise people opposite. When it comes to Weyerhaeuser, as was pointed out in question period today, if Weyerhaeuser makes not one cent in profit, it doesn't have to make certain payments pursuant to its agreement. But if the farmers don't make any profits, they pay not only 6 per cent, they pay nine and three-quarters per cent. That, Mr. Speaker, is an unacceptable double standard that the farmers of this province will not and cannot accept.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Money for Weyerhaeuser; nothing for the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan. Money for Pocklington; nothing for those waiting for hospital beds. Mr. Speaker, this government is old, it's tired, it's bankrupt, it's bankrupted the province. It's time to get rid of it. I'll have much more to say about this tomorrow, and I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I would like to move:

That this Assembly record with sorrow and regret the passing for a former member of the Assembly and expresses its grateful appreciation of the contribution he made to his community, his constituency, and to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Jacob Benson, who died in Victoria, British Columbia, on August 23, 1987, was a member of the Legislative Assembly representing the constituency of Last Mountain from 1929 to 1934 and again from 1938 to 1952.

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Just for the sake of formality, it's a motion that requires leave, and I would just ask for leave from the Assembly.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — I have it moved and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition. It will only take a few moments.

Mr. Benson came to Canada in 1903, married Hilda Ferris of Buckingham, Quebec in 1918. He was educated at Regina College and the University of Saskatchewan. Mr. Benson lived in Semans and was a farmer and municipal councillor. He was a member of many farm organizations and the Progressive movement.

As a member of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Benson regarded himself as a representative of many viewpoints. He began his long career in 1928 as an independent supporter of the Anderson government. He then ran unsuccessfully as a farm labour candidate in 1934. In 1938 he was returned to this House as a member of the CCF Party. He was re-elected in both the 1944 and 1948 elections. Mr. Benson failed in 1952 to be re-elected as an independent.

Mr. Benson liked to be remembered as a member who stood by his convictions, regardless of which side of the House he sat.

Mr. Benson was predeceased by his wife who died in 1986. He is survived by a brother and many nieces and nephews.

In recording its own deep sense of loss and bereavement, this Assembly expresses its most sincere sympathy with members of the bereaved family.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I want to join with the Premier in recognizing the contribution of Jacob Benson to the work of this Legislature, and in extending our condolences to his family and his friends.

Mr. Benson is remembered for his strong, independent voice on many public issues. I am advised that one of his main concerns during his time in this House was parliamentary procedure. He supported the dignity and the importance of the individual elected representative of the people. He was a man who cherished this Assembly as a form for free expression of ideas and principles. The morality, personal convictions, and responsible actions of the individual members of the legislature, I am informed, were to him a vital element of democratic government. His support of our democratic institutions therefore seemed unquestionable.

Mr. Benson's strong sense of public duty was evident in his long representation of the constituency of Last Mountain. He worked hard for his constituents, and he worked hard for this province.

Above all, Jacob Benson was a man who considered it a privilege to sit in this House and to be a representative of the people of this province, and more particularly his constituency.

We join with the Premier and the members opposite in extending our sympathy to the family and friends of the late Mr. Benson.

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to associate myself with the messages of condolences being extended today to the family of the late Mr. Jacob Benson, the former member of this Assembly for Last Mountain.

Through the courtesy of the Clerk, Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to review some of the remarks delivered by Mr. Benson in his speeches in this Assembly, going back to the 1950s and before. He was obviously a very remarkable speaker and a remarkable individual.

During his career, Mr. Speaker, he was associated with the CCF, with the Progressive movement, as well as serving as an independent MLA in this Assembly. He obviously stood for what he believed in, and he spoke in this Assembly with conviction, and he also obviously pulled no punches when he had a point to make. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, he made his contribution to the proper functioning of our democratic process, and particularly to this legislature, the central institution of our democratic process in Saskatchewan, and I would want to join with others in the Assembly today in extending our sincere sympathies to his bereaved family.

Motion Agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, I move,

seconded by the member from Riversdale:

That the resolution just passed, together with the transcript of oral tributes to the memory of the deceased member, be communicated to the bereaved family on behalf of the Assembly by Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

MOTIONS

Referral of Retention and Disposal Schedules to the Standing Committee on Communications

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I move, by leave of the Assembly, seconded by the Minister of Health:

That the retention and disposal schedules approved by the Public Documents committee be referred as tabled to the Standing Committee on Communications.

Motion agreed to.

Referral of the Report of the Provincial Auditor to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, by leave of the Assembly:

That the report of the Provincial Auditor for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1987 be referred as tabled to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Motion agreed to.

(16:15)

Referral of Report of the Saskatchewan Legislative Library to Standing Committee on Communications

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, by leave of the Assembly:

That the report of the Saskatchewan Legislative Library be referred to the Standing Committee on Communications.

Motion agreed to.

Referral of Public Accounts to Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health:

That the Public Accounts of the province of Saskatchewan for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1987 be referred as tabled to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

With leave, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

Referral of By-laws and Amendments of the Professional Associations to Special Committee on Regulations

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, by leave of the Assembly:

That the by-laws of the professional associations, and amendments thereto, be referred as tabled to the Special committee on Regulations.

Motion agreed to.

Referral of Annual Reports and Financial Statements of Crown Corporations and Agencies to Standing Committee on Crown Corporations

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, by leave of the Assembly:

That the annual reports and financial statements of the various Crown corporations and related agencies be referred as tabled to the Standing committee on Crown Corporations.

Motion agreed to.

Granting Leave of Absence to the member for Rosetown-Elrose

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, by leave of the Assembly:

That leave of absence be granted to the hon. member for Rosetown-Elrose from Monday, March 21 to Monday, March 28, 1988, to attend on behalf of this Assembly the commonwealth Parliamentary Association executive committee meeting in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Health.

Motion agreed to.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:20 p.m.