

April 28, 1988

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Private Members' Bills

Deputy Clerk: — Mr. Britton, from the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills, presents the third report of the said committee, which is as follows:

Your committee has duly examined the undermentioned petitions for private Bills and finds that the provisions of rules 56, 57 and 60 have been fully complied with:

petition of the Stephen and Michelene Worobetz Foundation, of the city of Saskatoon;

petition of the Full Gospel Bible Institute, of the town of Eston;

petition of Pastor Walter Boldt, Art Ratzlaff and Barry Hertz, of the city of Saskatoon.

Mr. Britton: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon South:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you, and through you to members of the House, a group of 18 grade 6 students from St. Michael's School in Duck Lake. They are accompanied by teachers, Lorna Cameron, Jackie Gamble, Delores Smallchild; a chaperon, Doug Gamble, and bus driver, Dave O'Neill. They are in the east gallery, and I will hope their visit with us today will be informative and interesting, and I'll be meeting them for refreshments and pictures later this afternoon.

I ask all members to give them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the member from Cumberland, who is up North today, I want to introduce a group of students who are here from Stanley Mission School. There's 15 of them. They are in grade 8. They are accompanied by their teachers, Felix Merasty and Maggie Kingston, as well as their bus driver, Tommy Ballantyne.

I would like to ask the members to join me in welcoming them and indicate also that I will be meeting with them for pictures and for some refreshments after the question period.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this Assembly, a group of 51 students from Roland Michener School in Saskatoon. They are seated in your Speaker's gallery this afternoon, and with them are their teachers, Jim Taylor and Maurice Postnikoff, and also chaperons, Scott Thompson, Peggy Craig, and Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes. I'll be visiting with them afterward with refreshments. It's indeed a pleasure to have them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure today to introduce to you and to other members of the Assembly, the Cathedral Area Community Association co-ordinator, in the form of Lesley Griffin, seated in the east gallery. Please join me in welcoming Lesley to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Surcharge on Vehicle Registration

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier, and it pertains to cabinet's consideration of a \$25 per vehicle — every vehicle — surcharge in Saskatchewan, and my letter to the Premier yesterday seeking clarification of government policy in this area.

Mr. Premier, my question to you is this: will you advise the House today as to whether or not your government intends to impose the \$25 surcharge, and if so, when?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for the auto fund answered that same question on April 13 when it was put forward by the opposition SGI critic. The \$25 surcharge was only one of several suggestions put forward by SGI officials. A number of alternatives are now being considered. I can assure the hon. member, the Leader of the Opposition, that we will not be raising the rates 24 per cent as the NDP did in Manitoba, nor will we be raising them 28 per cent as the NDP did here the last time they were in power.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Premier if I might, Mr. Speaker. The Premier will be well aware of the memorandum to cabinet by the former minister in charge of SGI, dated December 30, 1987, which sets out, among other options, the option that there be an increase of 21 per cent in January of 1989. That is to say, if there is no \$25 per vehicle surcharge right across the board, that there would be an increase of 21 per cent in January of 1989.

Will the Premier advise this Assembly — since apparently

all options are being considered, including this one — will you tell the House whether or not that alternative is under active consideration as well?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I said to the hon. member that we would not be raising rates 24 per cent as did the NDP in Manitoba, nor will we be raising them 28 per cent as the NDP did here in Saskatchewan.

We were presented with alternatives and we sent them back to officials to say, bring forward something else so that we can look at it. We're examining several alternatives, but you will not see rate increases like either the NDP did in Saskatchewan or they did in Manitoba.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A new question to the Premier. The Premier will admit, I would hope, that this matter has been before the cabinet at least since early of this year, 1988, with a variety of the options identified and discussed for cabinet's consideration. Surely it's not unreasonable for the people of Saskatchewan to expect that by now the government's policy directions and decisions in this regard will have been decided upon.

And if that's the case, why aren't those announcements made now, Mr. Premier? And do it now so that the voters in Elphinstone, in Eastview — but even forgetting about the voters there — the people of Saskatchewan can be informed. Why not tell us what your plans are? Why is it taking so long to deliberate on this issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, it hasn't been to cabinet for months, and it hasn't been discussed in cabinet for months. So we have many things that we discuss and are reviewing, but this wasn't one of them. And as I said to the hon. member, the NDP raised the rates 28 per cent in that last session that they were in, and 24 per cent in Manitoba. We're not going to do that.

And so the public can rest assured, either in Eastview or in Elphinstone, that that's not going to be the case here in the province of Saskatchewan, and I'll just reiterate it for the hon. member.

Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Premier, I have one last new question, if I might, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. It's clear that — at least it seem clear to me — we're not going to get an answer from the Premier before May 4, and I think that's unfortunate in terms of the people of Saskatoon and Regina and Saskatchewan.

My question to you, Mr. Premier, is this; the motorists of Saskatchewan have been hit pretty hard with increases in October of 1987, January of 1988, and now this cabinet consideration of \$25 surcharge across the board for every vehicle in Saskatchewan. In the list of these increases, Mr. Speaker, some of which are up to 94 per cent in the case of certain class and model, 38 per cent in the case of a half-ton farm truck, for example, on what basis can it

possibly be that the government is considering yet an additional substantial hike of \$25 per vehicle? On what justification, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, it clearly is an issue that is of concern to the NDP, because both in Manitoba and in Saskatchewan when the NDP were in power they lost government over rate increases. So they are quite paranoid about it. I will say our rate increases are not going to be anywhere near what they were under the NDP. And if you look at the rate increases under our jurisdiction compared to theirs, they raised them 55 per cent over the last three years of their administration; ours were nowhere close to that. We've had them very low, and our accident rate was much improved because of Lights On For Life and many other things.

So we are, Mr. Speaker, listening to the public, responding in a very reasonable way. I can say to the hon. member, and anybody watching from Elphinstone and Eastview, you're not going to see rate increases that match the NDP'S, either when they were in power here or like they were in Manitoba.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I must, with your indulgence, sir ask a very brief supplementary question. My question to the Premier is this: will you not tell the people, or tell the people of Saskatchewan now, if it's not going to be \$25 per car, what will be the increase? Why don't you tell them before May 4 as to what that increase is going to be so that the people of Saskatchewan will know? We are well familiar with you pattern of saying something before an election and acting after an election differently.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I said to the hon. member that the issue has not been to cabinet for months. So we sent them back and said, bring forward some new alternatives. We haven't received the new alternatives yet, and when we do we will make the appropriate decision. I just let the member know, and all the public know, that he can rest assured that they won't be as high as the rates that he imposed on people, or as high as the rates in Manitoba, because obviously the people rejected that. And clearly, Mr. Speaker, we are going to try to be a little bit more sensitive to the public's concerns than the NDP either here or in Manitoba.

Funding and Staffing at Saskatoon Cancer Clinic

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the Premier admitting that the rates will go up. We just don't know how much.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Acting Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, my question deals with the Saskatoon Cancer Clinic and the underfunding and understaffing of the clinic by your government. Mr. Minister, you will be aware, I'm sure, of the underfunding and understaffing and the shortages that we have of staff

at the Saskatoon Cancer Clinic.

I'm sure that you will also admit that there is now a formal waiting list of those patients waiting to get treatment in radio-therapy. Mr. Minister, I hope that you would also admit that it's your government's understaffing and underfunding that's causing these problems.

My question to you, sir, is this: when can the cancer patients and their families expect some action in this matter, and when are you going to resolve the problem of the underfunding and understaffing at the Saskatoon Cancer Clinic?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't accept the fact of any understaffing and underfunding at the Saskatoon Cancer Clinic. I do accept the fact that it was this government that built the brand-new cancer clinic in Saskatoon, state of the art, one of the best in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — And families in Saskatchewan are getting that type of treatment. Certainly there will be some line-ups; there always has been. There were when those people were in government, but they didn't have the type of facility to be treated that they have today in Saskatchewan, due to this government.

Mr. Rolfes: — New question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the facts simply are not true. There never was a waiting list when we were the government. That is readily admitted by the professionals at the cancer clinic.

Mr. Minister, I hear the rhetoric that you're saying. Mr. Minister, I hear the rhetoric, but the cancer patients and their families can't wait any longer — they need some action now.

Dr McGowan, head of radio-therapy, has said that when the move is made to the new clinic, present staff shortages will have to be made up and additional staff hired. Dr. White, the clinic director, has acknowledged there is now a waiting list for radio-therapy.

Mr. Minister, without trying to put too much rhetoric into this situation, when can the cancer patients, and when can their families expect some action so they can receive their treatment now and not a month or two months later?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, I find this very interesting from the opposition member who at one time occupied the chair of the ministry of Health in the Blakeney government, and he was on record as saying that he thought waiting lists were just quite part of the efficient operation of hospitals. You could check in *Hansard*; you'll see that that was a quote, exactly from that minister. It seems it's a big issue now. When he was the minister, a waiting list was normal and it was just good and efficient operation; that was his quote.

However, Mr. Speaker, getting to the cancer clinic . . . and

I'd like the people of Saskatchewan to remember that because he would love to see that saying of his go away, but it won't. But getting to the cancer clinic, certainly we have one of the best cancer clinics in Saskatchewan. We're opening it and developing it — and the same as the University Hospital. I mean, as you open the facilities, you put in the beds, you put in the furnishing, you hire the staff, you bring it up and running, and I can assure the people of Saskatchewan that will happen in both cases in not the too distant future.

Mr. Rolfes: — Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this issue is much, much too important for personal attacks, and I will refrain from that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — The cancer patients and their families, Mr. Speaker, don't need the personal attacks. What the cancer patients and their families need, Mr. Minister, is more funding, more staff. This is what the professionals are telling you.

I'm asking you again, Mr. Minister, please cut out the rhetoric. Please cut out the rhetoric and let's have some action. When are you going to provide more funding so that staff can be hired and the patients can receive treatment? When are you going to do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well I know, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite doesn't like to be reminded of his quote about the waiting list, but I thought it was apropos to put it out.

Mr. Speaker, simply put, we have built in Saskatchewan one of the best cancer treatment facilities in the Dominion of Canada, and we're very proud of that — one of the best in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — And, Mr. Speaker, we have more money in the Health budget this year than last year — more money per capita than anywhere else in Canada — and the staff will be in place and the treatment of the people of Saskatchewan will be here, and they will be receiving the best treatment of anywhere in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — Final supplementary. Mr. Speaker, one last time. Mr. Minister, we know the building is there, and the people of Saskatchewan appreciate that, but, Mr. Minister, that isn't going to resolve the problem. We have a waiting list. What we need now is money at the cancer clinic so that staff can be hired. I toured that clinic the other day. It is completed, but the doctors were concerned about the lack of staff. They said to me, now if we can only get the staff, we can put this thing into operation.

I'm asking you once again, will you make a commitment today, will you give the assurance to the cancer patients that funds, adequate funds and staff will be made

available so they can receive treatment now, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well, Mr. Speaker, in answer to that question, I'd like to go back to 1982 when that minister was not the minister of Health any more and I became the minister of Health in this province, and I can tell you that cancer facilities had been neglected to the point — and you can check this and the people of Saskatchewan can, with the people at the cancer clinic — that some of the best professionals were going to be leaving our province because of inadequate facilities.

We saw that need, we have built the best facilities, and yes, Mr. Speaker, they will be funded and they will be staffed, and the people of Saskatchewan will get that type of care, the best in the country, here in Saskatchewan in the cancer clinic.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Task Force on Health Care

Mr. Goodale: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By the end of this week, it will be six weeks, I believe, since the government announced its task force on health care, and I have a question to the Premier in the absence of the Minister of Health.

In that six-week period, Mr. Premier, I wonder if you can tell us what progress has been made, if any, in the structuring of this task force, and when would you expect the Minister of Health to be able to give some detail on a proposal that was the single specific in a very vague throne speech?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, I would be glad to say to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Health and the Premier's office has been working ever since the Speech from the Throne in putting together the details and the frame of reference for the task force or the commission, talked to members of the public who would be prepared to serve on that commission.

And in the very near future the Minister of Health will be announcing the members of the task force and its terms of reference, and the public will obviously have a chance to look at it. And then they'll begin their hearings and talking to the people across the province.

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Premier. Can he give us the assurance that all interested parties in our health care system, in terms of the various professional organizations around Saskatchewan, have indeed been consulted in the preparations for the task force, and have they all been invited to participate in the work of that task force, or are you in any way ruling out any specific groups? Because some of them have indicated that they have not been invited or consulted in this process.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well I can say, Mr. Speaker, that nobody is ruled out. But I'm sure that the hon. member will join with me in giving praise to the individuals that

are selected on this task force. They will be high quality men and women, very professional, and they will be well received across the piece in Saskatchewan. And, indeed, we believe this commission and task force will have credibility across Canada. They will be looking for the kind of guidance that Saskatchewan can provide for the 21st century with respect to health care.

So as soon as the minister can announce that, he will. He hasn't ruled out anybody. There's consultations and conversation going on with people from across the province.

Request for Return of Information

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question to the House Leader on the government side. Mr. Minister, it was on September 8 of last year that this Assembly ordered your government to provide certain information to the House. I refer you, and I have here the *Votes and Proceedings* of the Assembly of September 8 of 1977, and in those . . . in '87, and in those *Votes and Proceedings* . . .

An Hon. Member: — It seem like '77.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — That's right; it seems like 1977. In those *Votes and Proceedings* you were ordered to provide such information as out-of-province trips made by every government minister and agency, all public opinion polls commissioned by every government department and Crown corporation.

Now I ask you, Mr. Minister, it's now been seven months, which is a considerably long period of time. Why have you failed to provide this information to the House up until this time?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I'll check into it and provide the answer for the member, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. I'm wondering whether the minister is considering that to provide the information at the same time as the SGI increase in going to come.

Mr. Minister . . .

An Hon. Member: — 1994.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — That may be.

On September 15, Mr. Minister, in view of the fact that on September 15 you were asked information about money — public money — that was paid by every government department to Dome Advertising and Dome Media Buying Services, and this Assembly ordered you to provide that information some seven months ago, I ask you: what is there about the payments made to Dome Advertising and Dome Media Services that has prevented you from providing that information to the House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I think that there's nothing particularly sinister that would cause, or prevent me from providing this information to the House. Now . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — As I said earlier, we could use up a lot of question periods if they want to go through each return one by one and ask me what's preventing the information from being tabled. And I suppose that would make a far more interesting question period than the other kinds of questions they've been asking, Mr. Speaker. But suffice it to say, as I did to the first question asked by the hon. member, that I will check to find out where those returns are, and I will inform the hon. member as to where they are in the system.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, to help the minister in providing the answer and in his checking — new question — Mr. Minister, I have here two documents: one, which is a Public Accounts Committee document ordered on February 3, and provided by your Supply and Services department on February 26 asking for that same information, which you have been unable to provide for seven months — that was less than a month.

I have another one here provided by the Department of Economic Development and Trade, ordered on February 4 and provided in less than two weeks time. In view of the fact that your departments are able to provide that information in that period of time, and in view of the fact that you, therefore, and your ministers have this information in your offices, what is it that you're trying to hide from the voters, who are going to take part in the by-elections on May 4, that you have refused to table this information?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I think we should commend those offices on their efficiency in getting that information out so quickly. This will be the third time now. I will find out where in the system those orders are, and I will inform the hon. member as to the situation with those orders. And I know that the member is waiting in eager anticipation of getting all of that information so that it can go on a shelf some place and never be looked at again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Proposed Grassland National Park

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I direct my question to the Acting Minister of Parks. And my question is to the minister responsible, the acting minister, and it deals with the proposed grasslands national park in south-western Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, last fall, more than six months ago, your government stated that only one issue is holding up the establishment of the national park and that was the water rights. And it appears to have been resolved.

Now, however, your government appears to have thrown up yet another obstacle — oil and gas rights in the area.

Mr. Minister, when will you commit yourself to the

establishment of this national park and when will you be making an announcement of this establishment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the question was addressed to the Acting Minister of Parks, and I'm not that. But I am the minister that's responsible for Sask Water, and we have dealt with a number of issues that dealt with grasslands and its finalization of the contract for the grasslands.

I'm very pleased to advise the Assembly today that throughout the months of January and February my department staff worked very closed with Ottawa. They spent a considerable amount of time in Ottawa and have successfully negotiated a conclusion to the water issue that has been in the grasslands parks problem area for nearly five years. So I believe that was a great accomplishment. And they are now, through the Parks department, working very closely with Ottawa to finalize the last phases of that agreement. I would expect an announcement would be made in the very near future.

Intentions to Join the Tripartite Plan

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture and it deals with his intentions to join the tripartite plan and scrap the beef stabilization plan.

Mr. Minister, you state that if you were satisfied with the agreement through all the provinces of Canada you would go to that plan. Could I ask you now: have you been satisfied that the agreement reached with these provinces is sufficient to help Saskatchewan livestock producers, and will you be going forward and joining the national tripartite plan?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, the provinces are still negotiating and they haven't come to a consensus with respect to the operation of the plan that would be satisfactory to most provinces.

Most everybody would like to see a national plan and to join the national one so that we could have a comprehensive strategy and policy that would not be subject to countervail from the United States or any other thing under terms of reference with respect to GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

We're a little concerned that provinces in central Canada might subsidize to a larger extent than we can afford, in other words, top-load programs that are in place. So, we've seen much of that in the hog industry; the hog industry for many years moved from the West to the province of Quebec and in some cases into Ontario because of top loading in subsidy. We don't want that to happen in the beef business and so we're still in the process of going through the negotiations. I'd like to join it. The quicker we could join it the better. But we have to make sure that it is fair to us here in Saskatchewan as well as western Canada.

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Premier, will you go ahead with this plan, or will you insist that there be two main aspects of

the Saskatchewan plan to be implemented: one is single-debt selling, and the other is a cost of production formula rather than an averaging over 10 years? Will you insist on those two provisions?

And one more question: if not, why would you go to a plan that gives Saskatchewan producers less money than the plan they have now? Why would you not give them the same support as they have now?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — I'm sure that we can get into this in my estimates that are coming up this afternoon. But as I mentioned to the hon. member, if you go on a cost of production basis, just simply make the point that they can have very high costs in Quebec, particularly real estate costs around the city of Montreal and other places, and they'll inflate the cost; therefore they get a bigger subsidy than you would in the West. That's how they stole the hog industry.

They kept building the costs up and up, and they said it's on the basis of cost; therefore they get a bigger subsidy, and the province paid the subsidy and we lost. Now, I think we have some natural advantages, particularly as you know . . . and there's a large number of hogs grown here with barley, and with the cost of production in dry land, I believe we can compete. But I don't want to see the government of Quebec unload its treasury on some silly formula that we may put together that says they can use the cost of production in Quebec compared to the cost of production here. Because you know what will happen — they'll pay more subsidies in Quebec, and we'll be against the wall in a non-competitive situation, and I don't want to see that happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — With leave of the Assembly, I would just like to introduce some students.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Devine: — It's my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to introduce 25 student from the Lampman High School. They're grade 11 students. They're in the west gallery. They were brought here by their teacher, Mr. Boyd Sephton, and chaperons include Robins Lischka, and I would like the Assembly to extend a warm welcome to them.

And they will be having refreshments and pictures at 3:15. And if I'm in my estimates, my seat mate behind me here, Mr. Johnny Gerich, MLA for Redberry, will be glad to entertain you and put on a show and have his picture taken with you.

Welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Provincial Day of Mourning

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I request leave of the Assembly to make a very brief statement on a matter of interest to all members.

Mr. Speaker: — I believe before the members can grant you leave, that you have to indicate what it is, so they can make a proper judgement. If you could do that very briefly.

Mr. Hagel: — That has been indicated, Mr. Speaker, regarding the proclamation of today as a day of mourning for workers killed or injured on the job.

Leave granted.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I simply wish to bring to the attention of the Assembly, and all members, that today in Saskatchewan is officially a day to recognize and to mourn Saskatchewan workers killed and injured on the job in this province.

I would like, as well, Mr. Speaker, to express my appreciation to the Premier who has officially proclaimed this as a day of mourning, and accordingly, for the fact that the flags on this Legislative Building are being flown at half-mast.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I would just like to add to the hon. member some noteworthy achievements by the people of Saskatchewan in reducing the number of fatal accidents and injuries in the province of Saskatchewan.

We are looking now at Saskatchewan facilities that have dropped from as high as say 76 per year in the very early 1980s to down to 27 in 1987. And we note that we compare quite favourably with other jurisdictions, and we're glad that we can provide education and information that would allow, particularly young people, to be more careful, both at work and in automobiles and generally throughout the public.

So I'm happy to have declared this a day of note, so to make sure that our young people across the province of Saskatchewan, and people of all ages, can do the best in terms of reducing fatal accidents.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Agriculture Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 1

Mr. Chairman: — Would the minister introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With me is Mr. Jack Drew, deputy minister of Saskatchewan

Agriculture; Mr. Stuart Kramer, assistant deputy minister; and Mr. Wes Mazer, director, administrative services branch, Saskatchewan Agriculture.

Item 1

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to the minister and his assistants.

I have a number of straightforward questions that I'd like to ask right at the beginning, and I'd ask the minister if he could send over the details of these questions as soon as he has them available to himself.

I would like to have the names and salaries of each ministerial assistant at December 31, 1988. And also I would like the name, title, and salary of each one of the minister's personal staff, and has any of them had a pay change in the past 12 months, and if so, what was it? Do any of the persons have a government car or car allowance? I presume you're taking note of these. If I'm going too fast, just indicate. I would like to know the out-of-province travel in '86-87 by the minister and his staff, as to the date, destination, number of trips, purpose of the trips, and the total cost. I would also like to know the total in-province ministerial air travel in 1986-87 with the same details as the last one— date, destination, number of trips, purpose, and total cost.

Also I would like to know what costs the department incurred for polling, for advertising, aircraft charter or lease; and in each case the date, the firm, the purpose, and the cost. And did the agency do any business in '86-87 or '87-88 with Band City Aviation? I would like to know that. I would like to know the date, the purpose, and the cost.

And with respect to the government-wide efficiency productivity study being done by Coopers & Lybrand, did this agency incur any costs related to their study in '86-87 and thus far in '87-88, and are there are costs anticipated for '87-88?

Also I would like to know the names, positions of any staff members terminated since October 20, 1986, the total severance payments paid out in '86-87 and in '87-88.

Also I would like to know . . . I have an itemized list of the facilities like the offices, compounds, parking lot, etc., provided to your department by Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation. I would like to know the number of square feet or, in the case of parking lot, the number of stalls in each of the facilities. In those instances where the facility is not leased, would you indicate the amount which the department is paying property management for its use today, and how much was paid in the fiscal year '87-88. And in each case would you outline . . . would you indicate the use or what the facility is presently being used for.

And also, finally, would you provide an itemized list of services being provided by property management and the amount being charged to the department for those services today, as well as how much was paid in '87-88, for example: mail service, government automobiles, the

amount of money, furnishings, etc?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Chairman, the hon. member has asked for a long list of costs and statistics and information. I will endeavour to have . . . well I will ask my staff to get it together and provide him as much of the detailed information as quickly as we can assemble it. I don't have it all at my fingertips, but they will work at it and provide it as much — as quickly as possible.

I will make a point with respect to government space because it has been a little controversial recently and not well understood. I'll just make one point — and we'll provide the information with respect to agriculture. Approximately half of the unused space that government has is in the form of the new Whitespruce facility at Yorkton. And as the hon. member knows, that's a rehabilitation centre for young people with respect to drug rehab. And we purchased that from the federal government for a small amount of money, and it provinces about half the extra space that we have totally in government, let alone just in Agriculture, for a very good reason.

(1445)

So the cost is nominal, and I just make that point that there is no extra space. In fact, when we get the Mackenzie Art Gallery in the right place and comply with the regulations with respect to the new drug facility, health facility at Whitespruce, it will be less than 1 per cent. So overall, it's very low, and certainly you'll find it's very low in Agriculture.

With respect to 1987 and 1988 meetings and travel, I will get you the travel. I'll just point out, and I'll send over a list of meetings and people that I have met with as Minister of Agriculture — not as Premier, but as Minister of Agriculture — going back to January 12 in '87, and it'll go right through until December of '87, and then January '88 right through to date in 1988. And I have — 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 — 16 to 18 meetings per page, and I've got — 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 — approximately 6 completed pages of meetings — that would be obviously in excess of 100 meetings that I have had with people on agriculture, both in the province of Saskatchewan and other provinces, and some outside.

And it includes everybody from the university, to the board of directors of the pork board, to the agricultural credit corporation, to the North Dakota tillage association, to the sheep — wool commission; venture capital and agriculture; directing the livestock association, to the sheep — wool commission; venture capital and agriculture; directing the livestock association's annual convention; meetings with the president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; the milk producers association; young farmers association; vocational agriculture policy classes at the university; poultry and animal science; the pulse crop people; conferences in Ottawa on several occasions; packing plant people; the stockgrowers; NASDA, which is the North American . . . National Association of State Directors of Agriculture in the United States — and I'm meeting again in Quebec City in early next month with respect to that; various meetings with respect to land owners; a number with respect to credit and agricultural producers themselves; certainly many with respect to

those that are trying to improve diversification, processing, and manufacturing in agriculture.

So I will be prepared to forward this list to the hon. member, that has a large number of meetings that I have attended, both inside Saskatchewan and across Canada.

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Minister, I'd like to start these estimates in Agriculture by asking you if you would just take a few minutes of our time to lay out before us what you feel is going to be happening in Saskatchewan over the next five or 10 years — your perspective of farms and size of operation, the infrastructure that is out there now. Just sort of give us your vision for what Saskatchewan will be like over the next number of years and what you think it would be like, and also how you would like to see it, if that may differ. So just take a few minutes now to explain to us what your vision is.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well I would be more than glad to do that for the hon. member. I will say, on two or three fronts it is very important that the government of Saskatchewan provides all the infrastructure that's possible for diversification and processing and agriculture here in the province.

As you know, and I won't dwell on it, we have, in the neighbourhood of spending, \$350 million for natural gas for farms, towns and villages in rural Saskatchewan, the same with respect to individual line service so people can have access to telephones and bearing power lines. Those three general public utility measures will cost the taxpayer about \$1.5 billion over a period of years to provide that basic infrastructure for agriculture.

Secondly, I will point out that it is important to have a balance — an economic and, frankly, a political balance — in the grain business and in the livestock business. Much of what we've tried to do in the last few years is to have a better balance, a fairer balance. That's why we've provided, for example, the cash advances at zero per cent interest rate for the livestock industry so that they could have the same advantages of people in the grain business that go to the elevators or the Wheat Board and get a cash advance and it doesn't cost them any interest.

That combination now is perceived to be, and I'm sure you'd agree, much fairer in Saskatchewan as they deal with the various cycles that they're hit with.

Secondly, it's extremely important to go into the market and protect them against disasters that they can't otherwise deal with as an individual, and I refer to high interest rates, when they're 20 per cent or when they're very high, we should be there helping them because government can play a role. And we have, and we've been very proud of that.

And the same thing applies too, if they're taking on other treasuries like United States treasury or the European treasuries that have huge subsidies going to farmers in our competing countries; and if those subsidies cause surpluses in grain, for example, we can end up with \$2 wheat, and that means the individual farmer single-handedly is taking on the European or the American treasury. That's unfair, so I believe it's

important that we not only protect them in terms of high interest rates but we provide protection against those subsidies and protectionism internationally.

So we have argued for, and have been successful in providing, deficiency payments for farmers so that in fact they can take on that international instability and that unfairness, whether it's in the banking system or international monetary system, high interest rates, or whether it's because of unfair government subsidies. The two of those are extremely important.

The third thing that I would just mention with respect to the long run health of agriculture is yes, it will be much better if we can get other countries to back off the subsidies and the price of grain could come up to 5 or \$6. That's true, but it's going to take us getting outside Regina and battling internationally, and it would be much better if we can keep interest rates down around the 8 or 9 per cent as opposed to up around the 20 per cent. It's impossible, but we'll be there to help them.

But also it's to our advantage if we can get into processing and manufacturing of our raw materials; that is, in agriculture, particularly in the livestock sector, and in speciality crops, and in grain. The more value added and the diversification we can get into, the more money that's in it for farmers and people who live in rural Saskatchewan.

So we will be encouraging that, and that's why we've encouraged processing and manufacturing of meat — that packaging and that processing of the final consumer product that we can export to the United States or the Europe or to Japan or other places. That's very important to us, so we will continue to provide diversification efforts so people can respond in that fashion.

In that light, I suggest to the hon. member, is that he know, is that . . . and he knows the research is valid. I would have to say that I agree with the earlier research done by the NDP that lower tariffs into the United States market, into other markets, really helps agriculture because as you reduce the tariffs into the United States market, into other markets, really helps agriculture because as you reduce the tariffs, you reduce it on the processed package product, which is like the packaged bacon and other things. So in the research done by the NDP in 1974, and I agree with you, and I just quote from page 18 of your document that said:

. . . our philosophy (and we're not talking even just in numbers, but our philosophy) is that free trade is superior . . . and that the province favors reduced trade barriers both in exports and imports.

And it goes on to say on page 20 that in the agriculture sector, in the consumer sector, and in industrial manufacturing sectors, that we should reduce the temptation for protectionism, reduce the subsidies and go on to make sure that we trade, because we have some natural advantages here, particularly in adding value to products, like bacon instead of live hogs, or paper instead fence posts, and so forth.

So my vision, if you will, of the province with respect to the overall viability is a combination of dealing with the international problems, helping the infrastructure here;

that is, water, schools, roads, hospitals, natural gas, individual line service, electricity — all those things that we can provide to give our people a competitive edge. Fight as hard as we can to reduce the protectionism and subsidies internationally to get the prices up, because that's when you really make a living, and make sure that we go to defend the farmer and communities here, rural and urban, because Saskatoon and Regina obviously benefit when the farmer has money at the national level.

So if we can get money — I think there's now over \$2 billion that's come out to western Canada in straight deficiency payments, and they've also written off other debts — that money turns up in the cities and the towns and the villages. It's \$2 billion we didn't have before that we have now.

So the vision is to go out there and provide the infrastructure to work with communities, to work with young farmers, to provide education — and I could just touch on that so that you know that it's part of it — a new college of agriculture to make sure that we have a new biotech centre, make sure that we have the educational facilities that can go along with advanced management, because agriculture and rural people will survive only with good education and good management.

And if we can provide the technology, provide the infrastructure, provide the water, provide the various kinds of services, along with the international political support to reduce the subsidies and get access to markets, as well as information and money at the national level when it's needed, then I believe, clearly, Saskatchewan farmers are among the most competitive any place in the world.

We will continue to be the wheat basket of Canada. We have 43, 44 per cent of all the farm land in the country. We are very competitive with respect to dry land farming, and the rest of the world knows that. They come here to learn about the technology. And as you know, being from the Humboldt area, if we can put money into and research into . . . dollars into research like into PAMI (Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute) so that we can have the best dry land farming equipment. And that is part of that infrastructure that is very important so that farmers here can survive and do well, as well as export their technology and their goods and their services all across the world as they have been in the past, and in fact increase their wealth and their prosperity as a result of those kinds of programs.

Mr. Upshall: — Well, Mr. Minister, I would just like to narrow down a little bit now. That's a little overview you gave of the infrastructure and what you think that you've been doing for rural Saskatchewan.

Part of my question, Mr. Minister, was, in Saskatchewan we have 60,000 farmers, give or take. Down the road do you see any change in that? Down the road do you think we should be moving away from that direction, or should we be continuing in that direction of trying to maintain at least that many farmers in Saskatchewan? And do you think that we can accomplish that under circumstances that we're living in right now? And if not, why not; and if we can, why do you think we can? So just fairly

specifically, on the farm population in rural Saskatchewan, what you believe will be happening in the next few years, and what you would like to see happen, specifically, with population in rural areas.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the population in rural Saskatchewan will be a combination of people in towns and villages and farms. And we find that as you have more diversification in agriculture and diversification in the rural communities, that in fact you can have an increase in the population in rural Saskatchewan.

And you will find them, both farm and non-farm, living and working together side by side. And the schoolteachers will be living there and the credit union managers and the people who work in the service stations and the fertilizer plants and in the processing, like for example in meat processing or in seed cleaning or in combinations of pelleting plants and dry land farming, machinery manufacturing, all kinds of things that can go on at the local levels.

Now my vision is that as you provide this lower cost energy through natural gas, as you provide that energy in electricity and the water and the facilities and the education, the communication distance education facilities, you can see a growth in rural Saskatchewan that will lead other jurisdictions, because you're providing that overall farm and non-farm structure. So it is my estimate that it can be a healthy combination of things that you can do to help rural Saskatchewan grow, both towns and villages as well as farmer.

What you face today is the consequences of \$2 wheat and high interest rates, and that is really added to the debt burden that you feel on the farms today, on your farm or mine or others. And the \$2 wheat is a result of unfairness in the international markets — no other reason. United States and Europeans spend billions of dollars wrecking our life, and we have to compete against that.

So when you have \$2 wheat, you've got to find some help for people. We don't have enough money to compete with the United States or Europe on that basis. The federal government can help. That's the first thing you have to address, and you've got to get outside the province to go fight that war internationally.

The second thing is, just don't let them hit you with 18 or 20 per cent interest rates again. And clearly you know the problem with that, and it's been the basis of . . . I suppose you could say two elections in this province — '82 and '86. We will just never let high interest rates walk in and take people's farms and homes, because it's just totally unfair. It's an international phenomenon and you have no defence.

So I think those two things — fighting internationally to get fairness in the market and access to those and making sure that interest rates are down. To stand in defence of farmers and home owners is critical for us to handle the debt that you see out there to date because of those two international forms of cheating, if you will, that have really hurt Saskatchewan people, particularly in the rural.

(1500)

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Minister, I think you failed to address the main point of my question, and that was, and I'll be very specific — two questions. Do you think the farm population of Saskatchewan in five years time will be greater or fewer than it is today? And secondly, very specifically, do you think personally that we should have more farmers or fewer farmers in Saskatchewan? Very specific, please.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Very specifically, I would hope to see more farmers and more diversified operations that are into many kinds of agriculture. And I believe that that's possible.

Secondly, the number will depend on a combination of things: the international subsidies and the amount, the degree of interest rate fluctuation and how high it is, and obviously our ability to protect farmers under various kinds of conditions.

I can say to the hon. member, when interest rates were 20 per cent, it hurt, and that added to the burden. And so you've got to go back and look at why they're in some trouble today. And you obviously know that I extend some blame, if you will, to the NDP administration, because when they were 20 per cent there wasn't a dime. And I hold you at least partly responsible for the burden today because you weren't there.

And secondly, I know that it's going to take some really tough bargaining at the international level to get the United States and Europeans to change their mind. That's why I endorse the trade agreement we put together, because it deals with net subsidies. They have to bring their subsidies down to our level before they can get into our markets. That's a very good lever to take around the world.

And I would only hope you and your party members and people across the province that support your party would join with me and others to get that kind of a rule out there in the international market, because the subsidies have really hurt us here. I mean, that's what we face.

And yet I don't hear any endorsement of any plan today. I see it in your research. Okay. If I could show you. This is your research that says if you had free trade it would be better for us in agriculture. And I recommend that you read this research because that's the key — access to the markets, processing and manufacturing, and get those other governments out of subsidies and we can compete and do well at 6 or \$7 durum and \$10 canola and others.

But you can't do it if you're going to take on the U.S. treasury. And the only way we're going to get them to back off I sign an agreement — as you recommended in here, in 1974 — to get to the table, reduce the subsidies, move towards more liberalized trade, and both of us will be better off. So I just share with you . . . I think there could be many more farmers and much more diversification if we get access to markets and get other governments to back off their unfairness.

Mr. Upshall: — Well, Mr. Premier, I don't think you're

quite accurate with your last statement. In the document that you're referring to, it's talking about a global trading arrangement, not tying yourself into one country with the ramifications that are so great that will impact upon Canada and be very detrimental, in my estimation, with many aspects. And we'll get into that issue later.

But, Mr. Minister, you talk about your commitment, and I've given you, you know, 15-20 minutes just to so you could explain to me what you're talking about, what your theories are, about farmers and the support programs that are going on. But last year, Mr. Minister, in agriculture in Saskatchewan you cut out \$1 of every four spent by your Department of Agriculture. This year, times have . . . grain prices were down again and you have cut eight . . . another 8 per cent, I believe it is, off the budget. And yet at the same time you're talking about all the programs that you're going to maintain to support agriculture.

We have a 6 billion debt in this province - \$6 billion in agriculture, and I was hoping that in your explanation, Mr. Minister, that you would give us some indication of how you're going to handle that debt, and I've asked this question before. And you have not given me that answer before, nor do I hear it today. You put out a little booklet saying *Saskatchewan Agriculture Assistance Programs*, and when you thumb through the programs, you got special Canadian grains program, Saskatchewan agricultural assistance program. First item, special Canadian grains program — something doesn't relate to me there because I believe that's a federal policy, program. So albeit, but you're taking credit for it.

The second thing on your little list is the production loan program, and I will get into these in detail later. But assistance to programs — production loan program that you upped the interest rate, took more security on, changed the rules in the middle of the game; farmers' oil royalty refund, cut; farm purchase program, eliminated. And we can keep going through this. Livestock cash advances, cut 30 per cent.

And yet you're still telling me that you're going to do all these great and wonderful things because you're committed to agriculture. Well I'll tell you, Mr. Minister, when I hear what you're saying and when I look at what you're doing, they don't mesh. And I'll say they don't mesh because, Mr. Minister, I don't believe you have a commitment to agriculture. I think your rhetoric is showing clear right now. And I'll say to you, Mr. Minister, those are just a few indications, a few indications of why your rhetoric is not matching with your actions.

In Canada right now we have, according to a survey of farm debt capital and income review, it shows that government payment are now almost constituting about 60 per cent of net farm income. And the debt to income ratio has reached very, very unprecedented heights. And yet I hear nothing coming out of you how you're going to address that.

I mean, you're going to put the power lines in, and to maintain the infrastructure, and you're going to continue deficiency payments, and processing and manufacturing of raw materials — and I'm just repeating what you said — and reducing tariffs. But nothing is going to . . . unless

you come to grips with the facts, Mr. Minister, this debt situation in Saskatchewan is going to consume our farmers. And you said, yes, you'd like to see more farmers. Well I think that's pretty cheap talk when you compare it to the actions of your government.

And I'll tell you, Mr. Minister, if you turn over and look at the agri-business sector I'll give you an example. Cargill grain showed its highest pre-tax profit in 12 years during 1986 — 66 per cent higher than the profit record of '85.

Also, if you look at food processing companies, they're reporting average returns on equity of 14.6 per cent for the fiscal year 1986, about 2 per cent higher than other industries. I mean, this is all part of agriculture — and farmers sitting in Saskatchewan with a \$6 billion debt.

Also, the most startling, Mr. Minister, is when you look at the banks. Six major banks recorded returns in equity ranging from 9.2 per cent to 12.9 per cent in 1986, and profits ranging from 186 million to nearly \$500 million. Much of that \$6 billion debt to farmers is giving banks profits of \$500 million, and you're doing nothing about it.

And besides that, much of that \$6 billion debt to farmers, Mr. Minister, is debt that they owe you, and you're doing nothing about it. So it's hard for me to understand, although what you say sounds very good and well, if I was sitting back in my armchair with no worries, I would say that's a good plan, but if I'm out scratching around the soil and wondering how I'm going to make payments this fall, it doesn't work.

Mr. Minister, the facts are before us. And you talk about eliminating subsidies, that's going to allow us to get rich in Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Minister, you're dreaming. You're dreaming if you think that the European community or the United States is going to eliminate subsidies. I mean, all the while the U.S. is talking about eliminating subsidies — I mean, Europe is not co-operating, you know that, and they never will because they say they'll never go hungry again and I can't blame them — but all the time that you and the U.S. are talking about reducing subsidies the Americans are locking their subsidy program into perpetuity, basically, with any amount of money that they want, and I don't understand why you can't see that. I mean, they're not playing fairly.

So, Mr. Minister, I would ask you: why, when you see that \$6 billion debt in Saskatchewan, when you see the record profits from banks, when you see the processing industry with record profits and when you see the base of the agri-business with multiple profits, why don't you do something to alleviate the debt in Saskatchewan? Put a program into place.

You talk about high interest rates of 20 per cent. The interest rates now at farm credit, 13 per cent, are just as burdensome, even worse, than they were at 20 per cent, and yet you are doing very little. you are adding \$1.2 billion in the production loan and saying that's helping, but when you make the changes to the program it's not helping those who need it.

So, Mr. Minister, I'd ask you: do you have a plan? Do you have a plan to restructure and handle the debt — that \$6

billion debt — of farmers in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I will be glad to go through the plan for the hon. member. The combination of things firstly, as he knows, the modifications that were recommended to the production loan program by many organizations — the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and the wheat pool and others — to extend it to ten years, which has been done: 6 per cent for the first three, and 9 and three-quarters for the residual — means that there's \$250 million that don't have to be paid this year. That's a big benefit to farmers — 250 million — because we've given them the option to extend it out. now you have . . . If you don't know what that can mean to a lot of farmers, it's a tremendous help. it's not everything, but it's a tremendous help, recommended by farm organizations and municipal councillors.

Secondly, with respect to our budget, if I could just go back and remind you that when interest rates were 20 per cent, 1981-82, your Agriculture budget was \$77 million; that's all. Our agriculture budget is \$163 million, which is well over twice that — almost two and a half times — and interest rates aren't 20 per cent. So you had no idea that you were causing so much harm to people.

You had a very tiny budget, at 20 per cent interest rates, and they were crying for help and you didn't give them a dime. And when we have a budget of \$163 million, you stand up quite sanctimonious and say: for heaven's sake, why don't you increase it? Why don't you provide more? I've just said you've eliminated over \$200 million in payments in this year alone, just by extending the production loan program.

So, to be fair, you've got to look at . . . please look at your budget at 20 per cent interest rates. What did it mean? It meant that people were hurting and there wasn't a dime, there wasn't a dime coming back to them. And now we've got \$163 million and you're standing to complain.

Secondly, I want to, if I could just respond, you said a combination of all the programs that we've put together, you'll find that it's \$2.5 billion, provincial and federal, 1987-88 in the province of Saskatchewan, 2.5 billion.

You've got the farmers' oil royalty fund, over \$7 million; irrigation assistance, over 2, 3, 4, 5 million; farm purchase rebate interest is \$16 million. You've got the cash advance and livestock, 13 million; production loan, 20 million — 19.136; ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) loans, 3 million; feeder-to-finish market insurance, 21 million; SHARP program (Saskatchewan hog assured returns program), 1.8 million; feeder association loan guarantees, 8.6 million; calf guarantees, \$10 million; livestock investment tax credit, 7 million; facilities tax credit, 2 million; the agriculture development fund, 28 million; natural gas distribution system, 27 million; individual line service, 41 million; rural development corporation, another 190,000 — for \$217 million this year by the province of Saskatchewan.

Put that together with federal programs — that's the calendar year of 1987 — you got special grains, \$597

million; \$90 million in crop insurance; \$759 million, western grain; the Crow benefit, 420 million; farm credit corporation, another 18 million — for over \$2 billion. We got \$2.5 billion for the province of Saskatchewan coming between federal and provincial programs.

(1515)

Now the hon. member can stand there, and I say to him, as carefully as I can, and I don't want to get him unduly upset, but I would just mention this, just mention it, because he keeps going back saying: well where's your money? I said when interest rates were high in '81-82, you didn't do anything. At the same time, the previous administration under the deputy premier, the now Leader of the NDP, the man from Riversdale, you have such thing as succession duties, you had estate tax — it's commonly known as a death tax; if somebody passed away in the family, you charged them for that. If you saw families with 20 per cent interest rate, you wouldn't give them a dime, and you didn't.

You would go out and spend money buying their land, and you recommended that all over the province, buying a million acres of farm land. And you bought for so much, and you'd sell it higher to the rest of the children. And you'd buy it for 3 or \$400 an acre and try to sell it for five or six — very unpopular.

And then, if I could point out, when your leader gets defeated in the legislature, what does he do, his law firm, and the law firm of Mitchell, Romanow, Ching, and Taylor and whoever? Make a living working with the banks. It's common knowledge all across Saskatchewan. People in rural and urban Saskatchewan know that. Foreclosing on farmers and home owners — that's your leader.

You're standing and telling me that the banks are making too much money, and your leader and his law firm foreclosed on farmers all across the province, never did tell us how many you foreclosed on, how many home owners you foreclosed on. And you're talking about the banks. It's your leader that works with the banks. It's your leader that has the law firm that works with them, foreclosing on people — didn't give them a dime at 20 per cent interest rates and watched them go down.

Then when he got defeated he goes out there, and what does he do? He gets a contract with the bank to put them off the farm. Did he go out there and did he say . . . What was your response to high interest rates? What was his response? How did he feel? How did you feel when you found out the NDP leader's law firm, the law firm of Romanow, Mitchell, Ching, and others went out and foreclosed . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. Order, order. I would ask members not to refer to other members by name.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Chairman, I don't think the law firm is member of this legislature, and I'd ask you to check that ruling because it is the law firm I'm referring to, not the member.

Mr. Chairman: — Order. The Speaker has ruled that any

direct or indirect reference to a member by name is not permitted in the House.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will not use the name of the law firm that the Leader of the NDP was associated with.

An Hon. Member: — This was your agricultural policy, is it, Grant?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — The member from Quill Lakes asks me about agriculture policy. I will just say to the member from Humboldt and the member from Quills, he mentioned the banks. You asked me how the banks could make money, and I'm just reminding you that the NDP leader has a law firm with a contract with banks, that goes out and forecloses on farmers. That's your legacy, not mine.

When interest rates were 20 per cent, he didn't give them any help. Then when he got defeated he went out there and foreclosed on them for a profit. I don't think people like that. I don't think people in Regina like it or in Saskatoon like it, and that's the truth.

You have not responded to the questions we've asked. Could you please respond? how many farmers has he foreclosed on? How much money has he made foreclosing on farmers? This is the NDP leader who says that he's against banks when he's working with them.

I just rise to point out to the hon. member — I know that they don't like to hear this, but he raised banks; I didn't raised it. You raised the banks.

An Hon. Member: — We'd like the truth.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — The truth is, the law firm worked for the banks. The truth is, the law firm works for the banks and the banks foreclose on people, and the NDP leader and his law firm make money foreclosing on farmers. That's agriculture policy.

Well, Mr. Chairman, I will say, I don't find that particularly positive. I'm sure that an awful lot of people in Saskatchewan, in Regina and Saskatoon, would say, well, if this is the new NDP agriculture policy, foreclosing on folks, I'd be a little bit ashamed of it.

We've put billions of dollars into the hands of agriculture, and the NDP didn't do a thing for people when they were hurting a 20 per cent interest rates. Then when they got defeated, they went out and worked for institutions that foreclosed on them.

Now you know my agricultural policy. You know that we will defend agriculture in terms of low interest rates and deficiency payments, cash to people. We've got a budget that's almost three times your budget. And you can stand in your place and say that you can't blame Europeans for the subsidies they have; you're in *Hansard* now saying that. You just said you can't blame Europeans for the subsidies that they have.

Well I'm going to make sure the people in your riding and others have you on the record that say, you don't blame

others for subsidy. They understand that that's really going to help them. I would be very interested in knowing, very interested in knowing that if the people from Humboldt think it's just fine for Europeans to force us out of business by their unfair subsidies. I don't think it's fair at all. And I've asked Europeans to back off.

The president of France, Francois Mitterrand was right here in the legislature — you may have met him. We asked him to back away from the subsidies, and you would have said what you've just said in the legislature, it's okay; I understand; keep subsidizing. That's your response. I mean, clearly we have a difference of opinion when it comes to agriculture. You would encourage the Europeans to continue to subsidize; you encourage your own leader to foreclose on farmers; you would encourage the government to buy the farm land; and you didn't give them a dime when interest rates were 20 per cent and your budget was one-third of ours.

Now what does that say? You add all that up, what does it say? It says that, to me, that you don't understand food, agriculture, families, farming, any bit of that.

So, Mr. Chairman, I want to let the hon. member know very clearly, I don't agree with the NDP leader foreclosing on home owners or farmers in Saskatchewan. If the law firm that is associated with the member from Riversdale is foreclosing on home owners in Saskatoon, I don't think he should do that. I don't think he should do it. If he is foreclosing on farmers across the province, I don't think he should do it that either.

And I hope that he will stand up and tell the facts to the public and say, I made a mistake; I have foreclosed on these people; this is the amount of money my law firm made. It's not a good agriculture policy. I mean, how do these farmers feel? How do these farmers feel when the NDP leader forecloses on them? This is the NDP leader who works with the banks like this — works with the banks.

Now if you want to talk about the banks, I'll stand in my place until July and talk about the banks and your affiliation with people foreclosing on farmers and home owners and bands. And you brought it up, okay? You're talking about the profit from the banks. I'm talking about the profit to the NDP member from Riversdale who profited by foreclosing on people.

So I defend them, the farmers, in terms of high interest rates and I will go in there with subsidization and protection. I am not going to be involved in a law firm like the Leader of the NDP administration who says, I can't help you when high interest rates are there, but I can go out and foreclose on your farm — I can foreclose on your farm, when in fact you're in trouble.

Your agriculture policy is obviously different than mine; the money we put up is a lot higher than you did. The kinds of things we're trying to do internationally is clearly different than you, because you said you would encourage the Europeans to subsidize and, I suppose, the Americans. Now I can't endorse that; I won't; the farmers won't. If you go around this province and say, should Europeans cheat like that, they'd say, no, they should not.

They shouldn't subsidize and take away our markets and our prices; they should back off and play fair.

Your own research, and if I could just remind the hon. member in your research done by the Leader of the NDP in 1974, it says this about the United States, recommends on page 23: "the reduction of United States tariffs on some processed and manufactured forest, minerals and agricultural products would assist the Saskatchewan economy."

This is your research. When you were in government you said, reduce the tariffs between us and the United States; that's what you said. You had economists do it; it's for P & P; you sent this to the federal Minister of Trade. Now you're standing up and say, no, I think it would be a good idea if we did not do this with the United States, and you recommend that the Europeans continue to subsidize.

I mean, people would actually wonder . . . one, you wouldn't help farmers when they were in trouble. You'd buy their land; you'd recommend lower tariffs when you're in government. When you're outside of government, you don't recommend that you lower tariffs; then you make a living foreclosing on them.

I mean, you'd have to admit that you're pretty well 180 degrees here in terms of policy. You've been all over the map. So I would just hold you to your past, okay — 1974 you said these were the policies of the NDP government; you said that's the case, and it was your philosophy, and you clearly stated what you would and would not do with respect to interest rates.

I'm just saying we've followed your advice from '74, reduced the tariffs and reduced the problems and helped people. But now, obviously, you've decided to go the other way. So the \$250 million that we provide farmers this year, in new additional money, because the change in the production loan program is bigger than your entire budget for a series of years that you looked at in the past, either in 1974 or 1981-82.

Mr. Upshall: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I find this interesting. I ask a question about what this Minister of Agriculture, this leader of this province, is going to do about restructuring debt to stop the exodus of farmers from the land, and he gives me 20 minutes of personal attacks on people, nit-picking about something I said about the European community, blaming the NDP in 1982 for the problems that he's having today with his incapability to run government. But nothing — I heard nothing of how he was going to attack the debt problem.

And, Mr. Chairman, I will tell the minister, something that he said yesterday — and I just thought of it when you were going through your little rage that you go through every once in a while there. Then I thought to myself, well maybe this is the reason, that he's sort of out of touch with everything.

And although the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture, has promoted his image as Mr. Farmer with his toothpick in his . . . straw in his teeth and his cowboy hat on, yesterday he said, quote:

I've spent most of my professional life in the public service, either in government or in universities.

Now I think, you know, there's a little contradiction here somewhere. You got the . . . you're trying to promote the imager and then you admit to us yesterday that you spent most of your life . . . Well I say that, Mr. Minister, is the reason why. That's the reason why, or one of the reasons, that you don't know what to do, is because you are so far out of touch with this rural community.

I know what they're saying and I know what they're feeling and I know what they're living, because the people in this province care not about your rhetoric, about our leader; care not about the rhetoric about what I say about Europeans safeguarding their people, which is true. They care not your ranting and raving about the NDP creating the problem.

Those arguments worked for you in 1982. The problem, Mr. Minister, is now, and you're not addressing the problem. Every time that we make a suggestion about what you could possibly do, every time an institution like the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool makes a suggestion for farm policy, you ignore, it, or the farmers' union, you ignore it, or everybody, because you can't control the problem. And you can't control the problem . . . or you can control the problem only when you want to control the problem.

And I say to you, Mr. Minister, from past experience and listening to what you have said in years gone by, I think that your aim is to sit on your hands and let the farmers of this province slide out one by one, through stress and turmoil, which is inhumane in my books, until they bet down to a level where you can say, that's what I want, is larger corporate farms and reduced people. And that's what you're going after because you're not doing anything to prevent it.

Look at the headlines: "Saskatchewan agriculture loans worst on Royal's books." It says here that: "The percentage of non-performing agricultural loans held by the Royal Bank is higher in Saskatchewan than any other province." Payments were not being made on 17.5 per cent of the bank's farm loans in Saskatchewan. That's almost double the national average, and you're sitting on your hands and letting them slide.

And, "Bankruptcies down, but not in Saskatchewan." "Farm bankruptcies were down last year in every province except Saskatchewan," the article says, and two-thirds of those bankruptcies were farmers. And it goes on to say, as you, Mr. Minister, will know, that bankruptcy stats are just one small measure of what's happening in the province because there are no records of how many are just walking off and letting them go.

(1530)

And here's another one: "Saskatchewan has most unpaid farm loans." It says, "Saskatchewan has the dubious distinction in banking circles as the province with the highest percentage of non-performing farm loans," says Brian Farlinger of the Canadian bank association. "Fifteen per cent of the province's farm loans, or \$238 million, are

classified as non-performing," meaning no payment have been made for 90 days, and you sit by and you blow up and get your hands flying, and ranting and raving about everything but the issue. Why won't you attack the issue instead of going off half-cocked and trying to attack everything else but the problem?

And even worse, even worse, Mr. Minister, with a \$6 billion debt in this province we are looking very shortly at a possibility of a dramatic increase in the freight rate, something that you never stood up for. And we on this side of the House said, eventually that's going to be another nail in the coffin of farmers.

And this year, Mr. Minister, Mr. Farmer from the professional ranks, if you don't know it or not, fertilizer has gone up about \$50 a tonne; chemical has gone up. In fact 2,4-D is up about 60 per cent — 2,4-D is one of the most commonly used chemical because it was one of the cheaper ones, but now it's going up.

And, Mr. Minister, instead of addressing those problems, instead of trying to get the debt into an organized structure so that farmers can maintain their farms and stay on their land, you do nothing. And I'm not the only one that's saying that, because after your budget the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was saying that they weren't happy. It says:

The provincial government's budget fails to address the major issues facing farmer, says Barry Senft of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. We're disappointed there is no financial commitment to restructure the debt faced by Saskatchewan farmers. He said, there is \$6 billion hanging over their head.

He said you didn't address it, I said you didn't address it, and farmers are saying you didn't address it. Instead, what do you address? You address the fringe. You try to create the hype . . . I don't know what constituency you're talking to, Mr. Minister, but it doesn't wash in rural Saskatchewan — it just doesn't wash. And I think you know it doesn't wash, but I don't think you care, because if you cared you would do something about it. Here's another quote:

Farm groups disappointed. What was missing in the budget speech were programs to help farmers deal with the debt problem. (And it says) It looks to me like the government has forgotten about Saskatchewan agriculture, Gil Pederson of the national Farmers' Union said.

Another organization:

Bill Duke of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers said he had expected at least a commitment on debt problems facing prairie farmers.

I mean, Mr. Minister, everybody is saying you are in the position to do something. You can hand me all the garbage about the dollars that you're spending, and I'll tell you, you can ask the farmers of this province if they were better off in 1982 than they are now. And yes, I say

garbage, because your Band-Aid programs aren't stopping the . . . isn't stopping the flow of farmers off the land. And you know that, and I know that, and the farmers know that.

So I ask you, Mr. Minister, why are you sitting on your hands, in the light of three major farm groups in this province saying that you didn't address the debt problem? The fact that we over here have asked you time and time again to get a program in place to restructure debt. Why are you sitting on your hands? Is it because that you would like to see a number of farmers, as you said in the past, leave the land in Saskatchewan so that there are fewer farmers in this province?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Chairman, I will remind the hon. member that he has called \$2.5 billion — not million, but billion dollars — in cash, in the province of Saskatchewan this last calendar year, as garbage. And much of it, as he knows, is you don't even have to pay it back. It's just grants, and he knows that. Deficiency payments, cash advances, zero per cent interest rates — you don't pay any interest — you just call it garbage.

I mean, I . . . Let me also remind the hon. member, across Canada very few people, very few people think that the NDP have much knowledge about rural affairs or agriculture. You have one or two seats in the whole country in rural Canada, because you don't speak for farmer. You go on and on and on. You don't speak for them in B.C., in Alberta, Manitoba — we just finished an election in Manitoba. Okay? See? No. But you're not credible. You're not credible. The rural people don't believe you. That's the point. And when I do come out with \$2 billion in cash, federal and provincial, you call it garbage. That's what you do; you call it garbage.

Well the people in the farms that received it may not think it's everything, but they don't think it's garbage. It certainly helps. And it is difficult over there. And the reason it's difficult, and they all know, in Manitoba, the NDP government there didn't help them in '81 and it didn't help them in '86. And they rejected you. And they reject you in Saskatchewan. And they reject you in Alberta and they reject you in Ontario and reject you in Quebec and reject you in the Maritimes because you have no idea what agriculture is about.

You think that if you've got a union leader that can stand up and say, well if we could just have a bunch of unions running it, it would be just fine. That's the only answer. Well, Mr. Chairman . . .

An Hon. Member: — Brian Mulroney.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Obviously. The member from Humboldt and the member from Quills are very unique because they're among the only NDP representation in all of Canada, in rural Canada. They're rejected in riding after riding, in province after province, because they don't help when they have a chance. They didn't when they were in government here. They didn't, and they were rejected in Manitoba. They've never been elected in Ontario. No Canadians believe you are credible in agriculture. You had the chance here and you let it go.

And then on top of it . . . I want to share with you a letter, a letter on why you're not credible. You read to me why somebody in the farmers' union said I didn't have enough out there. Okay, but I want to give you . . . this is to your leader. This is a man from Albertville, Saskatchewan in January of this year. He says: Dear Mr. NDP Leader . . . He uses his name but I can't use it in here.

I want you to listen to this, please, and you will know why the NDP is not represented in rural Canada any place, except for the odd exception, like you did, and it was on a split because the Liberals and the Tories split and you come up the middle, and you know that's the case.

An Hon. Member: — Where?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — In Humboldt, and you know it. And you know it, and you know it's the case. And that's the only reason you're there is because of a fluke — it's because of a fluke. And you know it was everybody else in Humboldt know it, because there was a split in the vote and you happened to get elected right up the middle. And it's classic, and I've been through it and others have.

But I want you to listen to this letter. This is to your NDP leader. Okay. This man is from Albertville and he's saying:

Dear Mr. (NDP Leader). Recently I have heard on TV, a statement which apparently you have made that Devine and Mulroney are not doing enough to help farmers. What are you doing to help the farmers, especially when you are planning to win the next election, handling farm foreclosures, and advising the banks to take away the lands from farmers and their livelihood.

It must be a very good-paying business for you because you handle some very petty foreclosures. My foreclosure, which you are handling, is for approximately \$100,000 when I am worth about 600,000. I paid about 60,000 in five years. This fall I paid the bank \$8,000 in about three days after I received a notice of foreclosure from your office. The bank stated that you had advised them to serve this notice on me. Should you win the next election — God forbid! — there would not be any farmers left in Saskatchewan, you hypocrite.

Mr. Steve Daskosh from Albertville, Saskatchewan, writing the NDP leader because the NDP forecloses on farmers, and they stand up here and say that they would work on their behalf. Well go see Mr. Daskosh — go see him. Ask him what he thinks of the NDP. Ask him what he thinks of their farm policy and ask him what he thinks of their leader.

He just says, if they ever won the next election — God forbid? — it would be to the ruin of rural Saskatchewan. And this is a farmer, okay? This is a real farmer writing your leader, saying, what are you doing, working on behalf of the bank foreclosing on me?

Now you don't get elected in Manitoba because you're not credible. You don't get elected in Saskatchewan

because you're not credible, or in Alberta, or anywhere in the country. Because the NDP don't understand small business, they don't understand farmers, they don't understand farm families, they don't understand processing and manufacturing.

You don't understand it. You say, well, I'll buy your farms for the government. Isn't that the reason that people like your ancestors left Europe, was to come over here and own their own farm? — not for the government to own it.

And you're standing up there today defending land bank, like you always did. People in this country don't want the government to own the farm. They want governments to help. We've put over \$2 billion in cash out between the federal government and the provincial government, and you're out making a living — your leader is — foreclosing on farmers. That's unfair. That's not even being decent. It's not even being decent.

Rural people want fairness. They don't want the NDP leader making money foreclosing on them. Farmers like this write me, they write you, they write people all over the country and say, the NDP doesn't understand agriculture; all it knows is to nationalize it, take over their land.

Well, look, you and I can disagree about policy, but if you want to talk about support, I don't think you should call the money that's going into the hands of farmers, garbage. And I'm going to make sure your constituents have heard that — a lot of money. Because they spent the money in Humboldt, they spend the money in Quill Lakes, and they spend that cash in Saskatoon and Regina. It's a great deal of money — \$2 billion.

And we're proud to be able to help that. It may not be enough, but we're working as hard as we can on \$2 wheat and \$10 oil. And we've experienced that and low potash prices, and still back up farmers.

But we don't go out there like the NDP leader, receiving mail like this that we're foreclosing on them for a living.

Well, Mr. Chairman, I just want to point out to the hon. member, if he thinks this is agriculture policy that is recommended, I'd be surprised. If he's still recommending land bank; if he's still recommending Europeans continue to subsidize — and he's just finished saying it; he doesn't think \$2 billion is worth anything, garbage, when he didn't spend as much as we do in four programs.

ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) this year, 35 million; farm production loan program, 15 million; farmers' oil royalty rebate, 13 million; calf, 8 million; agriculture development fund, 30 million. That's over \$100 million in four programs, five programs. That's well over your entire budget when interest rates were 20 per cent. You haven't got a leg to stand on.

You went out and bought their farms when they were in trouble. You could hardly wait to get in their yard. You bought a million acres of farms. Then you say, well I'll sell it back to the kids when the price goes up. And they rejected that. And they rejected it in Manitoba; they reject

it all across the country. They would any place in the free world. They're even rejecting it in the Soviet Union.

The Soviets now are coming to their senses and saying, let farmers own their own farm. And the NDP in Saskatchewan is still 20 years behind the Soviet Union. You're sitting there saying that the farmer should belong to the government, organization should belong to the government, you should control the farmers. And if they get into trouble, you would recommend that you go out . . . You don't only recommend, you go out and make a living foreclosing on them. And you've got letters coming to me and to you to say that this is the thing to do.

Let's just make two, three, four points. First is, the problem is because of international subsidies and because you failed to help folds when they hit 20 per cent interest rates and got them into the problem to start with. That's the first point.

Secondly, we took office and said that we would help protect them against high interest rates and bring in deficiency payment. And we've done that.

The problem continues because people think like you do in some circles that say, way to go, Europe, continue to subsidize. I don't know why you like \$2 wheat or 4, \$5 canola oil, rapeseed, canola seed. But the Europeans are to blame for that — they're to blame for that and you have encouraged them. I don't understand how you can go to farmers and recommend that the Europeans continue to take borrowed money and compete with our people. It doesn't make any sense.

You didn't make any sense in Saskatchewan. You didn't make any sense across the country. And I just ask you to revisit and to relook at your agriculture policy, not only among your colleagues, but right to the top, to the leader. Because the leader had a chance at 20 per cent to help people; the leader had a chance to do things, to protect farmers; the leader was also there when they had death taxes and succession duties and he say it.

The leader was there when you took income tax from 34 per cent up to 58 percent. That's what the NDP did — income tax — and farmers had to face that. You took taxes from 34 per cent level up to 58 per cent, the worst and most rapid increase in the history of Saskatchewan. You did that.

And the leader of the NDP was in government, he was a deputy premier. He did the research on trade, he raised the taxes, he put them off the land, he wouldn't help them in high interest rates. And you ask why somebody might get excited looking at this bunch across the hall.

(1545)

Why would anybody in rural Saskatchewan — anybody — endorse an agriculture policy that took taxes from 34 per cent to 58 per cent and kick people off the land at 20 per cent interest rates, and then has the audacity, when he's defeated, to go out and work with a bank and make a living foreclosing on farmers like people from Albertville that write me and say, God forbid if they even won. Look what they do to agriculture.

Well, Mr. Chairman, anybody that would raise rates on utilities like the NDP did, raise taxes, force people out of their homes and out of their farms; against northern Saskatchewan because they wouldn't even continue to mine. And the member knows all those kinds of things that affect rural people. And not a dime, not any help. And then when they get defeated, to go out and make a living foreclosing on home owners and farmers.

Well, obviously, Mr. Chairman, they are not popular in Manitoba or Saskatchewan or Alberta or across the country. The country and the Canadians speak. They speak. And they speak at the polls. Rural Saskatchewan and rural Canada has no confidence, no confidence at all when it comes to the NDP agriculture policy. And I for one will make sure that rural and urban people know how you treat folks in agriculture. I'll make sure that you know, and I'll remind them; I'll continue to remind them.

If you take taxes from 34 per cent to 58 per cent — now what year was that? That was about 1973. They were at 34 per cent. By 1978 they were 58 per cent. That's a 24 per cent increase in income tax — one government, one government.

You gouged farmers; you gouged home owners; you gouged them all. You put them off the land, and then you go make a living cutting a deal with the bank to go back in and save them. For heaven's sake, I'll foreclose on you if there's a little bit of profit there. And you stand there and you say, well for heaven's sakes, you're not doing enough; your money going into agriculture, we'll just call that garbage.

Well, Mr. Chairman, I would just say to the hon. member, over \$200 million in cash savings to farmers just because of the change in the production loan program. Payments they don't have to make, and he calls it garbage. I don't think that the SARM calls it garbage; I don't think farmers call it garbage. I'll tell you what they did say was garbage: taking taxes from 34 per cent to 58 per cent. That's not fair, and foreclosing on farmers for a living is not fair.

And suggesting that Europeans continue to subsidize to drive the price of grain down is not fair, and that's not decent and you shouldn't be doing it. And if you continue that policy, that's why Europeans get away with it; that's why they get away with it. They think, I can fool people like the member from Humboldt in saying, well at one time we had a conflict so we're going to have to subsidize to have these huge surpluses.

Well they may have fooled the member from Humboldt, but they didn't fool Canadians. We will continue to fight for the reduction of subsidies internationally, all over the world, and for fair trade and freer trade and lower tariffs for the benefit of farmers and home owners all across this province and indeed the country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Chairman, that is the sign of a desperate man. And I would ask him just to calm down and relax a little bit and please let's talk about the problem. Let's talk about the issue.

You know you can give your political speech to the TV cameras if you like, and you can continue to, you know, campaign on years gone by, but I'll tell you, Mr. Premier, it's not working for you. It's just not working.

You know, we can talk . . . you can talk . . . I use the word garbage, and there's another misconstruing of what people are saying, and you do it all the time. I mean your programs are garbage. They're garbage because they're not being effective. Not the money we're talking about here.

And you talk about the deficiency payments, the stabilization payments. Well that money, Mr. Premier, and you know as well, is going to those farmers who are in trouble, simply to exist. It's not correcting the debt problem. And the facts prove that out. The facts prove it out. So you go and rant and rave, talk about everything but the issue as you do time and time again.

So I'm going to just ask you a simple yes or no question. Mr. Minister, regarding the \$6 billion debt crisis that we have in Saskatchewan for farmers, are you going to address that problem by implementing a program that will restructure the debt to a degree that we no longer see the slide of farmers off the land?

And I please ask you to remain relatively calm if you can, and we don't need a political speech. If you feel you have to do it again for the TV, I guess that's what you have to do, but let's talk about the debt problem, and would you answer that specifically, please.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Chairman, I just want to remind the hon. member, when he is blaming the banks for the problem, that I just have to share with him that — very calmly — that the NDP leader and his law firm have a contract with the banks to foreclose on farmers. Now that's his agricultural policy. And they don't like to hear that, and I'll say it as calmly as I can. The NDP leader's law firm has a contract with the banks to foreclose on people.

Now, it's one thing . . . I mean, it's certainly legal to do that, but this is the man, and the farmer that comes back and says, this is the great socialist, the man who's stick up for all the little guys. Okay?

Now you can say, lawyers can do this, bankers can do this; it's legal, it's legal. But the new socialist leader, who's going to defend them all, does it. That's the bang.

So I remind the hon. member, he is the individual who is going to protect the little guy, and he stands up there and he forecloses on them. And I just have to mention as calmly as I can — I know they don't want to hear it — but the NDP leader forecloses on farmers and home owners on behalf of the bank, and I just want the public to know that to really get at the roots of the guy.

So I would . . . I know that the gallery notices that they can't take that too well, and they don't like to hear it. And I would just ask them to be as polite as I could, Mr. Chairman, and just sit and listen, because when the hon. member is speaking, I don't speak. I just want to remind,

when they mention the banks are the problem, who is working for the banks, and it's the NDP leader who has a contract with the banks, forecloses on people, and I just want the public to know that.

And the more often, more often they mention the banks, the more often they're going to get the publicity that it's their leader, the NDP socialist leader, that works for the banks. Now that's all that's going to happen. So every time they mention it, it's going to come up.

They raised it. I'm just calmly reminding the public — just reminding them — that it's the NDP leader who has a contract with a bank, along with the other partner who is an NDP member of the legislature, making a living on poor farmers like this from Albertville, foreclosing on them. And this guy doesn't think much of that. He doesn't think much of that. He thinks that's awful. He thinks it's very, very sad. They just . . . pretty, pretty sad.

The hon. member raised the point that the farmers' union didn't think much of what we were doing. I want to just read a note from Gil Pederson, and it's certainly . . . it's from the farmers' union. It said:

Mr. Devine, I want to commend you for pushing your fellow premiers for a commitment to the Canadian farmers at the Humboldt meeting of western premiers. With continued leadership from you, Mr. Devine, I am sure that the Canadian farmers can count on some much needed assistance either from the federal or provincial governments, or a combination of both.

Thank you again for your efforts on behalf of Canadian farmers. Yours truly, Gil Pederson.

Now this is their regional 6 co-ordinator of the National Farmers Union who says to me, and says to fellow premiers, that he appreciates the fact that we can provide cash to farmers through deficiency payments. I say to the hon. member from Humboldt, who won on a split decision, I remind him, the NFU didn't call that money garbage; you called it garbage. The NFU said, thank you very much. They appreciated it.

Only the member of the legislature, the NDP member from Humboldt, would stand up and say that money's garbage. But the NFU (National Farmers Union) member said, with your continued leadership I'm sure Canadian farmers can count on assistance. Thank you very much.

Now the farmers' union said thanks the wheat pool said thanks, the cattle growers said thanks, the United Grain Growers said thanks, farmers have said it's very difficult and we appreciate the support.

So, Mr. Chairman, I point out to the hon. member, he reads from farmers union people. We can stand here and read bouquets, but I will just read one. In fact, I have two letters, one from a farmer who says the NDP leader should be ashamed of himself for foreclosing on farmers, and one from the farmers union that says at least somebody is helping us, putting cash in our pocket, thank you very much.

So I say the hon. member we made the changes with respect to the production loan. We are exploring all kinds of possibilities with farmers all the time in terms of the kinds of things that they would like to see us do. We have had the opportunity to talk with them, and we continue to talk with them with respect to restructuring. And you will be hearing more about that in the future.

Mr. Chairman: — Order. I would just like to remind all members, I notice that during the reading of the letter, member's names were being mentioned. I would caution the minister not to mention anybody's name other than your own.

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Premier, I want to pursue a little further and some specifics in respect to debt. And let's start this way. As of the end . . . March 31 of . . . well let's take it to the end of 1987. Would you specifically indicate how many farmers there were in Saskatchewan at the end of 1987?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — I just happen to have that information, Mr. Chairman. I'll give you the census numbers 1971, '81 and '86.

In 1971 census there were 76,970; 1981 census there were 67,318. There was an average loss of 965 farmers per year from 1971 to '81 through your administration; 1986 there were 63,431 for an average loss of 777 farmers through our administration. So the latest information that we have is obviously census '71, '81, and '86. And obviously your track record in terms of number of farmers and the loss of farmers over that period of time was not all that good.

Mr. Koskie: — What I'd like, the figures, certainly you should have it for the end of 1987. That's what I want — the figure of the number of farmers, because it's very pertinent to my subsequent questions. And surely as Minister of Agriculture you can provide the number of farmers that are now on 1987. You must know.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, we don't do a census — or Mr. Chairman — every year. No. You don't count the farms. You'll do it on a census basis — '71, '81, '86. That's what you do. So I don't have '87 figures and the hon. member I'm sure knows it.

Mr. Koskie: — Well are you standing in this legislature and saying that among your officials you cannot provide to this legislature the number of farmers that are in Saskatchewan in the end of 1987? Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Exactly what I'm saying. I can say, you can find the number of people who have a quota book, you can find the number of people who have hogs, you can have the number of people who are on various kinds of programs. But the total number of farmers is not counted on an annual basis except for census.

So you can go out and say, how many people on the production loan program, how many people have wheat board permit books, how many people are in various kinds of industries, how many have started, how many new farmers? You might be able to find those that have

applied to ACS. You may have those that have applied to various other programs. You can add those up — some cases they overlap.

But the federal government does the census, and it does it at regular intervals, and the last interval was '86.

Mr. Koskie: — How many farmers left the farms by bankruptcy or foreclosure or quitclaims during the year of 1987?

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Devine: — The number of farm bankruptcies, 1986 and 1987, and the rate per thousand farms — per thousand farms, okay, so that you have an idea of how farmers we have compared to how many there might be in Manitoba or Alberta. I've got this for all the provinces.

In 1986 in . . . We'll take the three prairie provinces . . .

An Hon. Member: — I want Saskatchewan's

Hon. Mr. Devine: — You'll get Saskatchewan.

An Hon. Member: — That's all I want.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well I'm going to give you the rest of it.

An Hon. Member: — Well go ahead.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — I will. Thank you.

In 1986 in Alberta there was 93 farm bankruptcies; in 1987 there was 71. The percentage of farm bankruptcies per thousand in Alberta in 1987 was 2.1 per cent. In Saskatchewan in 1986 there were 45; in 1987 there were 85, and the rate per thousand was 1.8. In 1986 there were 50 in Manitoba, and in 1987 there was 47, and the rate per thousand was 2.5.

So I point out to the hon. member, the best rate, that is the healthiest rate with respect to maintaining farms was in Saskatchewan in 1987 with respect to the number of farms on a per capita basis. The bankruptcies in Alberta were 2.1 per cent per thousand; in Saskatchewan it was 1.8; in Manitoba it was much higher at 2.5.

Mr. Koskie: — Mr. Premier, are you monitoring the situation of the extreme problems in rural Saskatchewan with the debt crisis? You've indicated in respect to bankruptcies, and that is not the greatest reason for exodus of farmers, because there is . . . a number of them are doing a quitclaims with the financial institutions, a number of them have attempted to sell off and salvage. So what I'm asking you: have you been able to monitor, to indicate to this legislature how many farmers in '87 have actually left the land? That's the question I'm asking you because in my view it's a serious problem. I would have thought you would have thought it was a serious problem. I would have thought that the Minister of Agriculture would have, indeed, the facts. Do you have those facts as to the total exodus of farmers in '87?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the farm land

security board and the agriculture credit corporation and the counselling people and others are working with farmers on an ongoing basis with respect to debt adjustment and restructuring. The credit unions are doing it, the financial institutions are doing it, with respect to the restructuring of debt and leasing and renting — a combination of things. And they're doing it as we speak, all the time.

What I have for you, and 1987 is the last year, this last year, the number of bankruptcies and the percentage per thousand. And I've laid it out there. Now there are people who are going through various kinds of restructuring on a quarter section, on a half section, on part of their farm — reappraising some other parts of it — that are going on all the time. And the hon. member knows that. And that's what he means by quitclaim.

You may say, I will settle on this quarter, I will settle on that so that I can stay on the farm; I will reassess this; I will refinance; I will lease; I will rent; I will custom farm, and a combination of things that are taking place. That goes on every day. And where they actually come out at the end of the day and the end of the week or the end of the month is information that obviously is in the hands of the agriculture credit corporation or the counselling people or others who are involved in that process in the financial basis, like credit unions and financial institutions and banks and so forth.

Mr. Koskie: — Would the Premier be able to provide the number of farmers who have lost their holdings and any equity in their land, and have arrangements whereby they are merely leasing back? Have you any statistics as to the problem that is happening out there? I mean, people are losing their farms daily, Mr. Premier, they are. Aren't you aware of it?

And what we're trying to get at is some of the facts. How many farmers have lost all of their equity in the land, and have you any report from the Farm Credit Corporation and from the other financial institutions which would indicate that now what they have is a tenant relationship with the financial institutions, be it Farm Credit Corporation, bank, or provincial government? Do you have that statistic, as to how many farmers who once were purchasing land, have lost all of their . . . completely of their equity, and now are tenants?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Chairman, there isn't a farmer in the province who hasn't lost equity. But I'm not sure that you understand the situation. The value of property and land and real estate has collapsed from a level here down to about half that. Everybody's lost equity.

In some cases you will find that the debt now is higher than the equity position, and in some cases, it's almost all debt. And it's all relative. In some cases it was 50-50. And as the price of land goes down, and as interest rates come up, and the debt accumulates and income goes down, you find the value of the assets have decreased. So that you have situations in every single farm, every single one — your riding, others around — where the equity has dropped. I mean, and everybody's faced it because the land values, therefore their asset value, have declined.

Now you're asking me how much. I would say on average they've probably dropped 35 to 50 per cent across western Canada. You asked, how many farmers did it happen to? It happened to them all. It happened to everybody. You asked me, are those now in the position where they're going to be renting more or they're going to be leasing back or that they're going to restructure their loans? Many farmers have done that, and they've done it across North America. It's happened in every community.

Now that's the reason, obviously, that we have restructured loans, restructured the production loan and provided deficiency payments and cash and protected them against high interest rates. That's precisely why, because it happened to everybody.

I remember you and I having discussions whether you should make it universal or not. It's happened to every farm family. That's why our programs go out to every farm family. It's across the board. We've all lost that equity, and we have to make sure that we work to whatever we can to help get it back, earn it back, restructure, lease, rent, redo, go to the counselling people, go to others who would back us up in terms of rewriting a loan, operating loan — all those provisions and more. That's what we're prepared to do. And we've met with people across the province, we listened to the SARM and the wheat pool when they recommended that we extend our loans out to everybody over 10 years and save the payments of over \$200 million this year alone. So it's universal across North America, clearly it is, and this province and the federal government combined has provided more money and more assistance than ever before.

You may say it's not enough, but I would say to the hon. member, we'll provide as much money as we can, with as many programs as possible, and if he has suggestions with respect to programs, I would certainly entertain them if you want to offer ideas. We get them from farmers, we get them from other people. We'd be more than happy to look at all kinds of things to help home owners, rural and urban; farmers, rural and urban; small business.

I mean, one of the things that we can do in rural Saskatchewan is provide off-farm opportunities, and we have in communities. It's very important, particularly in the oil patch. By reducing the business tax by as much as 50 per cent, that is very important to small business. People in rural areas work in small business and on farms. That's extremely important. The tax break that's going to take place July 1 for everybody in the province — 99 per cent of them — is going to be very important.

To be able to back up the federal government and said, rewrite this or write off much of the loans at FCC (Farm Credit Corporation), write them off, just get rid of them. They've done that. Raise the price of wheat; they've done that. Provide deficiency payments; that helps a great deal.

All that information and all that access and all those funds applies to everybody so that, indeed, we can recognize that the equity decline in this circumstance applied to everybody, and we should be aware of that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Koskie: — He must have forgot the question, obviously. It was very, very specific and the Premier obviously has no facts and probably no concern.

So I ask you, could you provide this information, and would you ask your number of officials that you have with you if you don't know the answers: can you indicate the number of titles that have been . . . of land that have been transferred from the ACS, from Farm Credit Corporation, or to ACS and to Farm Credit corporation and to banks and credit unions in the last two years from farmers? How many titles of land, the value, the amount of land in each case?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well we'll have to ask and see if we can get that from ACS, from other people that are collating those kinds of statistics. And if I can get them, then I can forward to the hon. member.

Mr. Koskie: — I thank you for making the attempt. But what we're trying to get at, Mr. Premier, here today, is the seriousness of what is happening in respect to rural Saskatchewan.

And part of it, I would have thought that you would have done an analysis of how much land has been lost, how many titles to land, to the ACS and to Farm Credit Corporation, to banks and other financial institutions, because that indicates clearly — clearly, clearly — the magnitude of the problem. And that's straightforward, very specific. And I'll tell you, you don't ever have a handle on it. You can't even indicate what is happening out there.

I want to ask you — you indicated that the best statistics that you have is 63,431 in '86, number of farmers in Saskatchewan. I'd like to ask you — and assuming . . . I think we have to assume that there are less farmers today than there was in 1986, because certainly farmers are losing their land.

So I ask you, Mr. Premier, could you indicate out of that, using this 1986 statistic, 63,431 farms, can you indicate the number of farmers that are insolvent out of that number?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — You'd have to describe at what level you would call insolvent — their asset value versus their liabilities, at what point. And then we would have to go to FCC, the banks, the credit unions, the agricultural credit corporation and others, and ask them for various kinds of ratios.

I mean, you're asking for all the various combinations of debt to equity that are out there on 60-some thousand farmers. Now that's a . . . I would think that you'd understand that's an impossible situation, to try to pull all that together.

How much is the debt increased? On average, over a period of time, we can probably come up with an estimate of that. We can come up with the fact that there are several billion dollars in debt and we can do that. We can have it on an average basis that we can give you per farmer across Saskatchewan, indeed across the prairie province. And it's increased.

The debt/equity ratio has gotten worse as a result of \$2 wheat and high interest rates, there's no question about it. But the specific information that you're asking is virtually impossible to give on an individual basis. We can give you averages, and that's what we will try to do.

Mr. Koskie: — Mr. Premier, you commissioned a very expensive road show that went around Saskatchewan dealing with the farm problem. And in that report, if you have read it, they say that there are 11 per cent of the farmers are insolvent. And you didn't know that, or do you not accept their definition of insolvency, of the report that was prepared by your own members?

I ask you: do you accept that proposal which says, and I'm going to read it here to you so that you have at least some information:

Many farmers leaving the industry will be forced out. The Farm Credit Corporation estimates 11 per cent of Saskatchewan farmers are insolvent, while an additional 28 per cent are having considerable cash flow difficulty.

This is the report, this is the facts that was accepted by your study group, your MLA, your road show. And so what I am saying to you, Mr. Premier, if you accept that and if they accept that proposition, and if they accept that definition of insolvency and put it into the report as part of what farmers are to read, and the agricultural community, then what you are saying, Mr. Premier, that there's between 6,300 to 6,400 farmers out there today that are insolvent. Would you agree with that?

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Chairman, the hon. member just read into the record that this was one financial institution's estimate of what the number might be in terms of insolvency, and we reported it. That's what the committee was to do, was report its findings.

The FCC says an estimate of approximately 11 per cent, given their definition of insolvency and given their ability to go examine the agricultural market out there. And you're asking me for another estimate. Do you want the banks' estimate; do you want the federal government's estimate? I you want to extrapolate, taking their estimate and their definition of insolvency and say that if there's 10 or 11 per cent and there's 63,000 farmers, then there's going to be over 6,000 farmers that are in insolvent position, based on their definition of what that is.

Now you can rewrite the definition; is it 90-10, is it 30-70, is it nothing at all in terms of equity and — all debt? You can write that definition any way you like, and you can carve it out any way you like. We're aware of the fact that farmers needed deficiency payments, that farmers needed interest rate protection, and they needed cash advances, and they've needed a whole combination of programs that amount to several billion dollars — not millions, but billions. That's why we're there.

You failed to recognize that you are the reason that they're in trouble, and that's what I have to keep reminding you. When interest rates were 20 per cent,

where were you? You got them into trouble and you're asking me to bail them out. you wouldn't respond, and they'll not forget that. They didn't in Manitoba and they didn't here and they won't in Alberta and they won't across the country, because talk is cheap. We put billions on the table, and you didn't when you had a chance.

So I will not stand here and not go back to what the cause of the problem is. The cause of the problem is: when they needed help, you weren't there; and secondly, it's an international problem when we've got subsidies coming out of Europe and the United States that wreck our prices.

So those two things, interest rates and low prices, are the reason we're providing protection against high interest rates and cash, and we will continue to do that. And you're saying, well is it 11 per cent or is it 12 per cent or is it 2 per cent or is it 6 per cent? So you won't get into what the cause is. You didn't. You never have in this legislature. You've never got into the cause. You've always just said, what are you doing?

Well I'm saying, I've put up more money, more cash, than you ever did. And much of the reason for the problem is when there was 20 per cent interest rates, you didn't respond. And home owners know that as well.

So we did and we'll be glad to respond some more. And it doesn't make much difference whether it's 6 per cent or 12 per cent or 2 per cent. You can play with those numbers all you like. The key that the farmer wants to know: who's doing something about it, who's putting cash in my pocket, who's defending me against high interest rates, and who's out there trying to get the United States and the Europeans to back off the unfair subsidies. And clearly, across Canada, rural people know that it isn't the NDP, because they didn't do it when they had the chance, and even when their research said so, your research — and you were probably a cabinet minister in 1974 — your research said you should go out there and fix, but today you deny that.

So, I mean, your record speaks for itself and ours does. And we will continue to back up the farmer and defend him every way we can and I would be glad to have your suggestions. What are your ideas? In terms of the kinds of things that we could do to help farmers survive in Saskatchewan and indeed across Canada. If you've got some good ideas, bring them forward. We haven't heard any from the NDP. No new ideas. No new ideas. So if you've got some, let's hear the ideas. We won't have to argue over whether it's 10 or 11 per cent, what's the ideas to provide some help to farmers that are new, other than land bank? And I cannot accept land bank, and I won't, and I'll give you that right off the top. You did, I wouldn't. But, other than that, if you've got some ideas I'd be glad to look at them.

Mr. Koskie: — Well, basically, Mr. Premier, you should be ashamed of yourself with the lack of detail of the analysis of the problem, because it is a serious problem, Mr. Premier, and it's . . . and you can't get away with your rhetoric.

I'll tell you it's a very, very serious problem because you don't even have a definition nor an analysis of the

problem and you've admitted that here today. You said you don't know. But Farm Credit Corporation says 11 per cent of the farmers are insolvent. And you have to admit that's 63 to 6,400 farmers across this province. And you're saying your programs are working wonderfully. That's what you're saying — 6,300 farmers, 6,400 farmers insolvent. And you sit there and say, we have done all we can. We are fighting for the farmers.

This report goes on, Mr. Premier, to say that 28 per cent, in this report of your road show, 28 per cent are having very serious cash flow problems. Do you realize the magnitude accepting those figures, Mr. Premier? That means that 25,000 farmers out of your 63 or 62,000 farmers are in very serious problems. That's how well your agricultural policies have worked — 40 per cent. And he stand up in this legislature with no analysis, with no . . . and he goes out and sends out a road show and you should be embarrassed with the recommendations of your own party members.

I want to say that here in this report — I can't use the Farm Credit Corporation figures because you don't agree with them or you haven't seen them — in your own report here of your own members, it goes on to say:

High equity farmers will probably survive the current period of low market returns and declining asset values. However, the one-third of the farmers currently holding three-quarters of the debt may not have the resources to continue farming.

One-third of the farmers of Saskatchewan, in their own report, says that they will not be farming. That's what it says.

And you stand in here and disgrace the farmers of Saskatchewan with your tirades. This is a serious problem and I came into this House to be serious, with the farmers' lives at stake.

Have you read the *Star-Phoenix* with the family with four little children having lost 1,400 acres of land. You know what, just imagine . . . and this Premier sits in here and tries to make light of the magnitude of the problem. Forty per cent of all the farmers are in serious trouble, and he stands here, he has no analysis of the problem, and he comes in here with not one single representation to solve the problem — not one.

His friend Brian was out here. Did he speak to Brian to find out whether the federal government would join in to solve this debt? Not a word, not a single word, because they only come to the farmers' rescue and throw out money at the farmers during the period when they're desperate in the electoral fight. That's when they may throw it out.

But I want to ask you, Mr. Premier: in light of the fact that your own report says that 33 per cent, 33 per cent of the farmers of Saskatchewan are about to lose their land — and you sit in this legislature with your uncaring group of so-called rural members and make lightly of it. And I want to ask you, Mr. Premier — if you take a look at the farm debt in Saskatchewan in 1986, you find that chartered

banks have about 1.6 billion, the federal government have 1.5 billion, the provincial government has 1.5 billion, the credit union .9, others .4 billion. If you take a look at that debt, 1.5 billion with the federal government in 1986 and with the provincial government, 1.5 billion — \$6 billion of debt at the end of 1986.

And I'll tell you, I'll tell you, you helped to precipitate it, too. You did, and the farmers know it. And you know what your solution was? You know what your solution is? Your only recommendation in here of substance is equity financing, which the farmers rejected, Mr. Premier. You couldn't sell it. And what you're trying to do is to set it up on an experimental basis.

But you have plans, yes. It's in the clippings. It indicates that what you want is outside, outside money. Hong Kong is ready, says one of your Tory associates. Oh, yes, there's 50 to \$100 million. Hong Kong would come in and help out those farmers — turn them into tenants. That's your policy. That's what you've set up — equity financing.

Forty per cent of the farmers with their families and children — and you stand here and pretend to be standing up for families. Do you realize, Mr. Premier, the agony the farm crisis is causing? Are you aware of the farm crisis? And you sit in this legislature and make light of the subject matter. That's what you do; you make light, laugh at the situation because when you were an economics professor, Mr. Premier, you know what you said, you said the consumer couldn't afford to keep 80 per cent of those non-productive farmers on the land. That was your plan and your realization is going to come true because you're going to set up equity financing and outside interests and going to be owning the land, not the farmers and their families.

And I say, Mr. Premier, you can laugh all you want, but there is a crisis out there and it's within . . . the debt structure is within the hands of the federal government and the provincial government. Because if you look at it, half of the debt is held by either the provincial or federal government. And you mean to say that you can't get the Prime Minister who you call your buddy, and you think that you and the federal government cannot go together and in fact restructure that debt. Of course you could, but you don't intend to; you don't intend to.

Mr. Premier, going into the election in 1986, you knew that there was a problem with young farmers who had substantial debt. You knew that, but you didn't go and address it as any administrative Premier looking at the overall problems that were in fact developing in Saskatchewan. You didn't do that. You said, I've got to buy an election. Buy an election, I said. And he said, I'll give a \$25 production loan to them whether they need it or not. That'll buy me an election. Well it did. But I'll tell you it bought you a crisis, too. It bought you the biggest crisis that Saskatchewan has known since the last depression. That's what it did. You bought an election, giving \$25 to every farmer whether they had no debt and no financial problem — that's what you did. Even in spite of the fact that you as Minister of Agriculture should have known that on the horizon what was happening is that many young farmers had gone into farming and needed assistance — debt restructuring. And I'll tell you, with that

\$1 billion, you could have done an amazing job if you wanted to deal with the problem.

But you weren't interested, Mr. Premier. You were interested in buying votes, and you bought an election. But you bought on your hands also the resentment of farmers across this province. And I'll tell you the problem, the magnitude . . . which you've said yourself, and your Finance minister: I can't deal with it any more. You say, I'm going to open the treasury; Finance minister says, treasury's empty. Who are we to believe?

I ask you specifically, Mr. Premier: in view of the fact that \$1.5 billion of the debt is held by this province and in view of the fact that \$1.5 billion is held by the federal government . . . I submit to you that if you wanted to solve the problem, there's an easy way. You get together with the federal government and you look at the crisis, and what you do is restructure the debt so that the young farmers have an opportunity in order to survive.

And so I ask you, Mr. Premier: do you have any proposals to the 40 per cent of the farmers in Saskatchewan in desperate problem — 40 per cent — 40 per cent of the farmers in Saskatchewan who are about to lose their land. And they start yelling across, and he's never . . .

(1630)

An Hon. Member: — We want to know if you have any proposals.

Mr. Koskie: — Yes, yes, but I ask the premier, I ask the Premier: have you any proposal? Have you discussed this with the federal government? Can you announce whether or not there is going to be a restructuring of debt, or is equity financing the solution that you see for saving agriculture in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Chairman, I can . . . I find it interesting that it's the NDP who has counted the numbers that they estimate will be insolvent, and it's the NDP layers who are foreclosing on them. Now if it's true, if he know that there's 6,000 farmers that are in trouble, and he's a lawyer and the leader's a lawyer, they know that they can make up to a thousand dollars in a foreclosure — that's \$6 million in cash by these people who are making a living foreclosing on farmers.

Now I find it really interesting that the member from Quill is a lawyer; the leader of the NDP, the member from Riversdale, is a lawyer; the member from Saskatoon West is a lawyer. And they are putting together . . . they're putting together the estimate of the number of foreclosure.

And obviously, as we've read here in the legislature, they make a living foreclosing. They go out there on behalf of banks and they foreclose on farmers. So if you take 6,000 farmers times a thousand dollars apiece, you could make up to \$6 million foreclosing on farmers. And they've got it down to a science.

I think it's pathetic, Mr. Chairman. I mean, they seem to

rub their hands and feel happier the higher the number they can get because they've got their law firms foreclosing on them.

Well I don't think they should gloat when farmers are in trouble. I don't think that they should take people that have had all kinds of family pressure and financial pressure and suffered the consequences of going through foreclosure, and then they add to it by going out there on behalf of the bank and foreclosing on farmers, and making money doing it.

I can only say, Mr. Chairman, if they've got the numbers down of how many people that that lawyer can foreclose on and this law firm . . . because the Leader of the Opposition has a nice little law firm that is now on the record and in public all over Saskatoon that he foreclosed on farmers and home owner. I mean, they must sit back and just wait or people to have difficulties, and then they can go out and make a living foreclosing on them.

You've got to go back and ask yourself — and I mention this to the member from Quill again — he never responds to why people are in this trouble; he never admits to the problem. When they were 20 per cent, I'd like to know, did he or any member of his caucus have a contract with the banks or financial institutions when interest rates were 20 per cent and they were government?

They refused to help them. Did they have a contract with the banks at that time? Did they have a contract? Is that the reason they said, oh no, I'm not going to help; it's an international problem, and at the same time they knew that they could make money foreclosing on farmers?

Because now it's evident. It's out in the public, and people have written letters to the newspapers in Saskatoon and said, is it true that the NDP have foreclosed on home owners and farmers? How many have they foreclosed on? How much money did the member from Riversdale make foreclosing on farmers? What other law firms that are NDP foreclose on farmers? Okay.

I notice that the NDP leader's law firm is now unionized, Mr. Chairman, that a brand-new union in the NDP office of . . . the Leader of the Opposition has a law firm, and he's got a brand-new union in there. Is this so that they can collectively bargain into the foreclosures of home owners and farmers?

I'll tell you, farmers are going to look pretty closely at that new unionized law firm. The NDP leader has now a unionized law firm. It is involved on behalf of the banks foreclosing on farmers. I'll tell you what they'll do. They'll put the NDP together with union leaders and banks and say: now we see the truth in Saskatoon. The NDP leader, union leaders — because he's unionized the law firm — and the banks working hand in hand, foreclosing on farmers and foreclosing on home owners. It would make any member opposite pale to even think about it. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Can you imagine that? It's the only unionized law firm in the province. It's the only one run by a socialist, that we know, that forecloses on farmers on behalf of the banks.

And you talk to me about farmers. They're in trouble today, because when interest rates were 20 per cent, the NDP wouldn't do a thing for them. They're in trouble today, Mr. Chairman, because there was no help.

Do you know what happened? The NDP law firms would work for the government of the day to nationalize the farms, and they'd get a little money for that. They bought a million acres for land bank. They'd go to NDP law firms, and they'd go out there and say, would you help me get this farm on behalf of the government? Got a million acres of land in government — in government, Mr. Chairman.

Then they said, this is the solution . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Chairman, they don't like to hear the facts, but the people of Saskatoon, the people of Saskatchewan and the people of Regina have learned about the tricks of the NDP. They've learned about them now — union leaders, together with an NDP leader and the law firm, together working with the banks, making a living foreclosing on home owners and farmers in the province of Saskatchewan and, indeed, Mr. Chairman, in the city of Saskatoon.

Now you ask yourself why, why would people in Regina or Saskatoon, or farmers, or other, have confidence in an NDP premier if you're a home owner or a farmer? How could you have confidence? Here's a man who has a law firm that works with the bank and the unions to go foreclose on home owners and farmers. That's what he does. And he's standing up saying: vote for me; I'll be good for rural Saskatchewan; I'll be good for all these people.

They don't like to hear this. They don't like to hear this. They say, oh, for Heaven's sakes, the NDP are going to win Eastview and the NDP are going to win Regina, and it'll vindicate them all if it happens.

The people of Saskatchewan won't be fooled, Mr. Chairman; they know. They know. You can ask for all the by-elections you like and all the vindication, but if it's the NDP law firms, NDP law firms, and the member from Riversdale's law firm, and the Quill Lakes's, and others who have law firms, who are now saying, we will work with the banks — and they've never responded.

I ask the member opposite from the Quills: would he at least tell us how many people his law operation has foreclosed on? the farmers would like to know that. That's a legitimate farm question, an agriculture question. How many people has this unionized law firm out of Saskatoon, run by the NDP on behalf of the bank, how many people have you foreclosed on? You've go the numbers all right. You sit there with 6,000 or 20,000 — for all we know it might be half the farmers that are in some trouble — and you're sitting there rubbing your hands: I'll bet, on behalf of the bank, I can foreclose on those people.

Well, Mr. Chairman, I want the public to know, the public to know that it's the NDP law firm, the NDP leader, who is making money foreclosing on home owners and farmers. And, Mr. Chairman, I will not back away. I'm going to

continue to tell the public: we'll put money up with the federal government; we'll put dollars up with the federal government; we'll provide deficiency payments; we'll provide cash advances; we'll provide programs — natural gas, water, irrigation; we will provide individual line service; we'll help build communities, build agriculture colleges.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have to say to the people of Saskatoon and the people of Regina, who the NDP's so excited they're for voting for them: make sure at least before you cast your ballot — before you cast your ballot, ask yourself, is it right, is it right for the NDP leader's law firm to foreclose on home owners on behalf of the bank, is it right for the NDP leader's law firm to foreclose on farmers when they are going broke. Is that what a socialist does? Is it right? Ask yourself that. You can vote NDP if you like, but you ask: is that what good socialists do; is that what the premier-elect would do if he was elected?

Well, Mr. Chairman, I'll tell you, I'll tell you, I look at the member opposite and I look at the colour in their faces when you mention that their leader has got a deal with the bank, and he's unionized his law firm, and you've got union leader, a bank and an NDP leader all wrapped up in one, and they are saying, well, I can hardly wait until farmers and home owners get into trouble because I can foreclose on them in Eastview, I can foreclose on them in Elphinstone, I can foreclose on them in Carrot River. They can foreclose on them in Albertville, as we've read the letters today.

The NDP should be ashamed of themselves. They got caught with dirty tricks in Elphinstone — their president did; they got caught with their hands in the cookie jar, foreclosing on people on behalf of banks; they've been caught pulling all kinds of things and the people are saying, I want to know how many farmers — just tell us the truth, just tell us the truth — how many farmers has an NDP law firm foreclosed on?

Well listen to them holler, Mr. Chairman, listen to them holler. They don't like to hear it. I'm not going to stop. I'm not going to stop; I'm going to remind the public day after day after day. I'm going to remind the public that the NDP leader has foreclosed on farmers and home owners day after day in the province of Saskatchewan, and I'm going to continue to remind them. When the former minister stood up and says, we can't give them a dime when interest rates are 20 per cent, and then he can go out and make a living foreclosing on them, it's a shame.

Mr. Chairman, it's absolutely a shame, and I'm going to continue to remind the public that if that's the principles, if those are the principles of the people that are in the NDP and that leadership, that would work with the union and the bank together to foreclose on home owners and farmers, then the people of Saskatchewan should at least know the truth as they cast their ballot. Mr. Chairman, they should at least know the truth.

I ask the hon. member just tell the public before they vote, how many people the law firm of the man from Riversdale, how many people has he foreclosed on, how many people has that law firm foreclosed on on behalf of

that bank? Tell us that. How many people in Saskatoon, how many farmers? And if you won't tell us that, then at least we'll know that you're hiding; you're ashamed of it as you should be.

We defend home owners against high interest rates. We defend farmers against high interest rates. We'll continue to do that, Mr. Chairman, and we are not going to back away from somebody standing up and saying, well I know the numbers. I know now why he knows the numbers; he can add them up in his own law firm and say, if I can foreclose on them, I know how much money that I can make. I think it's pathetic, Mr. Chairman.

That member — that member could tell us how many he's foreclosed on, or his NDP friends have foreclosed on. I wish he would come clean to the public and tell them about NDP policy in Manitoba, in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and across the country. You just tell us how the union leader and the bank and the NDP leader go hand in hand and beat on farmers and beat on home owners. You tell us how they do that, Mr. Speaker, and I'll be glad to respond in detail to the billions of dollars we provide to home owners and farmers in this province, because we stand for people and families and decency and fairness, not that kind of monkey business as those guys got caught in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Koskie: — I asked the Premier whether he had an opportunity when the Prime Minister was down, whether or not he had an opportunity, in light of the magnitude of the problem here in Saskatchewan, in light of the number of farmers that are in serious financial problems — in his own report, in his own report it says 33 per cent of the farmers will not be able to survive, and this Premier absolutely, totally refused to address the question.

Obviously he's prepared to play politics with his friend, Brian. There's a federal election coming along, and maybe they'll try buying another election, but I'll tell you they are not concerned with the welfare of the farmers of Saskatchewan.

I will tell you, there's a new reality in Saskatchewan today. Right here, today, can you feature the Premier standing up, with the magnitude of the crisis, and farm families in serious financial problems, listening to this tirade of nonsense that was put forward here this afternoon. Just imagine. Just imagine farmers in difficulty with little children, about to lose their farm, their home, their livelihood, their way of life. And this Premier stands here with a tirade of absolute garbage — no recognition, no sorrow. Here we came here today to discuss in a very serious manner, Mr. Chairman, the magnitude of the problem and how we can collectively address it. And I'll tell you, I am concerned about the farm crisis, the debt crisis.

And I asked you, I asked you, Mr. Premier, whether you had any solutions. Oh, we will look after it. But your Finance minister says, the treasury is broke.

An Hon. Member: — What's your solution?

(1645)

Mr. Koskie: — Ah, now, the one without the hair that needs the hair transplant, the member from Kelvington-Wadena, is starting to hurt a little. So he asked the Premier whether he should start to heckle, and the Premier said, yeah, protect me, because I'm getting beat up — I'm getting beat up on facts. That's exactly what happened in this Chamber this afternoon. The Premier gave him the nod to send one of the goon squad to his defence. Well isn't that nice.

Well let me continue to talk about the farm crisis. I'm going to say to you here, we had choices in this last budget, I'll tell you. We had a choice of protecting the farmer and the farm families, or whether we're going to give further benefits to the resource companies. And what was the option that the Premier chose? Resource companies. He cut the resource royalty again, which will cost 30 to \$35 million, into the pockets of the resource companies. That's what he did.

He needed . . . he said, I'll help farmer, yet he cut his budget by \$8 million. And what did he do with the corporate income tax? He said, we've got to help the corporations, so he cut the tax from 17 to 15 per cent and he put that \$8 million . . . he took the \$8 million out of agriculture and put it into the hands of the corporations. That's exactly the same amount of money — \$8 million he took from the farmers and the farm budget, and he put it into the pockets of the corporations. That's what he did.

Oh, and then he had an opportunity when they . . . and he says, oh, we've had tough times, you know; the oil prices are only \$10. Well where are you there? Why don't you ask your Minister of Energy? It's 17, \$18, and has been for a year. You could be getting revenue to help the farmers if you had them as friends instead of the oil companies, the multinational corporations.

You could afford to give a pulp mill away to Weyerhaeuser of Tacoma, Washington. And you know what he said to the people of Saskatchewan? This is how you can believe this Premier. He said, we're going to sell this for \$248 million. And all his press releases said \$248 million. But you know what we find out? They cut another \$12 million off the purchase price; \$12 million they gave to Weyerhaeuser. Could have helped the farmers of Saskatchewan.

Add it up. Add up some of the revenues that we could have had in this province in order to attack the magnitude of debt that we have. We could have had \$1.7 billion from the oil company if we had kept a reasonable resource royalty policy. One point seven billion dollars they gave away. Corporate income tax, another \$8 million this last budget. Resource royalty reduction, again another 30 to \$35 million that is cut.

There is the solution, if we wanted to have a solution. But he opted for his corporate friends. That's what he said. and I guess I've got to address to some extent the Premier's morality, because all I can say, Mr. Premier, you used to consistently refer to "Give her snooze, Bruce." And all I can say is that yesterday in the legislature we discovered who Bruce was.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

An Hon. Member: — Kickback.

Mr. Koskie: — Yes, kickback.

This government, under your premiership, has been one of the most incompetent, the most wasteful government that ever dawned in the history of Canada. Do you realize that you took a province with \$140 million of surplus, 11 balanced budgets and do you know what you have done? You've solved no problems on a long-term basis; all you did is pour money out for electoral gains. That's what you did.

And now today what we have, not only are the farmers in deep trouble, not only are small-business men increasingly in difficulty — today we have the largest per capita debt in all of Canada. That is the management of this Premier here.

And he stand here and he say, oh, we are going to protect the farmers; we will open the treasury. And what he did is open the treasury to the corporate friends of the Tory party — the corporate tax, the resource royalty decrease. And what did he do to ordinary people across this province that he's talking about and pleading that they consider who they should vote for? Well I'll challenge the voters who are voting next Wednesday. I'll tell you to compare — compare how you had it under the former premier and how you have it today under this Premier.

You ask whether your tax load is equivalent. Today we have the highest per capita . . . we have the highest personal income in all of Canada. That's where we're at. And I'll tell you, we had one of the lowest per capita personal income tax under the previous New Democratic government. And they have laid a tax burden on the people of this province, the like of which has never been seen before.

And we stand here today seriously wanting some of the specifics, some of the details, some of the analysis of the problem, and what do we get? We get a Premier that is ranting and raving, won't even sit down and discuss in his estimates — estimates are expenditures and proposals, that's what it is.

And did you hear one, Mr. Chairman, one proposal for the farmers in your riding? I didn't. And I'll tell you, the farmers of Quill Lakes didn't hear it. And I'll tell you well, I'll be pleased to take the transcript of my questions and your answers and deliver it to the farmers in Quill Lakes. I'll be pleased to do that.

I want to go on to say, Mr. Chairman, as I have indicated before, this is not a time for lashing out and acting political. This is a major concern for both political parties — all political parties. It's concern of every citizen in Saskatchewan, and it takes serious addressing of this problem.

I want to say, Mr. Premier, that I believe in a rural way of life. I think it's a special way of life, living on the farm.

I think it's a beautiful way of having your children, raising them in rural Saskatchewan. And right today I see before my eyes, as a result of the policies of this government, I see before my eyes, that 40 — 40 per cent in their own report, 33 per cent they say will not survive. One-third of our farmers gone, a way of life destroyed, and this Premier stands up with the most foolish dissertation, an insult to the legislature, an insult to the people of Saskatchewan in addressing the problem of the greatest magnitude since the great depression. That's what we have, and I say it's a pathetic performance, Mr. Premier. I'm sorry for you that you have lost all touch, that your political manoeuvring has made it impossible now for you to solve the problem. But it think you should be honest at least with the people of Saskatchewan.

And I think that, you know, rather than having empty office space down at the Ramada Renaissance, that it would be much nicer to help some farm families. That's what I say. Not empty rooms in the Renaissance hotel; that's not what we need, Mr. Premier. What we need is some concrete, civilized, intelligent discussion of it, all of us working together to solve the crisis. That's what we want. We don't want irrationality. we're sick and tired of your rhetoric. What we want to do is to discuss on an intelligent basis. I don't think you should stand in this legislature and disgrace the position of Premier of this province. That's what you have done, and I think you should be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Premier.

And I want to go on just to discuss a little further what they propose for the people of Saskatchewan in resolving the debt crisis. He lashes out at the land bank and today, I'll tell you the Farm Credit Corporation . . . more farmers are farming land owned by the Farm Credit Corporation, are farming land with no title owned by banks, are farming land owned the ACS. This is what is happening.

And he says, we're going to have more tenants. We'll turn this into the Philippines. We'll have all of the land owned by some Hong Kong that Premier Vander Zalm is talking to. He might bail you out. He's a billionaire — that's the boys you ride with.

But I'll tell you, rural Saskatchewan has more depth and more heart, and they won't be destroyed by you and your policies. I'll tell you, the farmers of Saskatchewan may have voted you in, but I predict the farmers of Saskatchewan will also see your demise . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Koskie: — . . . because the farmers of Saskatchewan, I'll tell you, from '44 to '64 supported the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation), and they supported the NDP party from 1971 until 1982. You don't have much of a record or a history in this province, you know, but we have. And as one farmer said to me, and another business man said, we have no problem with coming back to the new Democratic Party because throughout the years and the history of how we've dealt with people, he said there has been a bond of trust that has been developed.

And I'll tell you, that's what they're looking for today is

decency and a careful analysis of the problem, a co-operation of governments to solve this crisis, which is brought on not by their efforts because all of us will agree that the farmers of Saskatchewan are excellent farmers.

And as the wheat pool official said, we have to get to the bottom of this; we have to address the debt problem. And they saw this here report here and you know what he president of the wheat pool said? Disappointing. Equity financing is not what the farmer want; equity financing — it turns farmers into tenants, and farmers of Saskatchewan will not be denied their right to own land. And I grant them that.

Mr. Premier, I am glad we had this opportunity and I hope that a lot of people in Saskatchewan watched your performance this afternoon, because I'll tell you you had no message but garbage to the people of Saskatchewan. That's what you had. And when you talk about foreclosures, and you raised it in urban Saskatchewan, I ask you ... you won't be feeling quite so brave.

That's why you had your agricultural estimates now before the by-elections so that we wouldn't have a little bit more ammunition. That's why you moved them up into here, because you're cowardly. You wouldn't wait till the people of Saskatchewan spoke. He raised the issue of the two by-elections. He raised the issues of foreclosures in the two ridings Elphinstone and Eastview and, Mr. Chairman, you heard it.

And so I want to comment on it, Mr. Chairman. And I say to the people of Eastview and Elphinstone: can you trust what the Premier says? He said we're going to improve health care and he guaranteed that. And he improved it all right. Yes, he improved it. He wiped out hard-pressed farmers in rural Saskatchewan, the best dental program in North America. That's what he did for the hard-pressed farmers. He took away the best program that they had in rural Saskatchewan.

And across Saskatchewan what else did he do? These are hare-pressed times in rural Saskatchewan, and he says that for the seniors and the elderly people and the families with problems, with sick children, oh, he says, I'll give it to the oil companies, 30 million bucks for resource royalty cut, but I'll charge the people of Saskatchewan. In rural Saskatchewan he says, I'll charge them for their dental program, wipe it out, and I'll charge them for the drug program. Boy, is that fighting for rural Saskatchewan.

And I guess that's why you had to stand up here in this legislature this afternoon. That's why you had to stand up here in this legislature because you didn't have anything concrete to say — absolutely nothing to say, Mr. Premier. And we are disappointed, because we came here to this legislature not to call names, not to get into the gutter, because if you want to get into the gutter, we can do that. But that's what you did this afternoon.

You wouldn't talk about the crisis and how it's going to be solved. And everybody that is sitting here in this legislature knows that you will not address the problem. But what you want to do is to get into the gutter and

distract from the problem which you created.

Mr. Premier, it's very disappointing. Never before have we had ...

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.