

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to the Assembly, His Excellency, Bereng Augustinus Sekhonyana, the High Commissioner of Lesotho. His Excellency is in Saskatchewan to sign some agreements both with the federal government and the provincial government, as well as visit with several agencies. His Excellency is sitting in the Speaker's gallery, and I would ask all members to welcome our distinguished guest from Lesotho.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gleim: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to introduce to you, and through to the rest of the Assembly, 46 students, grade 7 and 8 and 9, from the school of Frontier. It also gives me the pleasure to introduce to you the teachers that are here with them today, Murray Legge and Ruth Armstrong, along with chaperons Ron Bukken, Judy Erickson, Merle and Sandra Sanford, Arlene Briggs, Liz Christensen, Collette Anderson, and Wendel Patzer. And also along with them is their bus drivers, Wendel Patzer and Joel Christensen.

I would like to welcome them here, and I hope they enjoy their stay in Regina, along with sitting in the Assembly here for question period. And after the question period, I'll be meeting with them for drinks and for a chat in room 218. So I'd like for everybody here to help me welcome them to Regina and to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you, and to all members of the Assembly, a group of 38 grade 9 students from the Stobart Higher School in Duck Lake. They're accompanied by teachers, Walter Epp and Nora Perrilat; chaperons, Jean Cameron and Linda Blanchard.

I will be meeting with them for pictures and refreshments later. I would like to ask all members of the House to give them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and through you to the Assembly, 23 grade 8 students from Ituna, Saskatchewan, who are here in you gallery today. They are present with their teach, Bill Hudema, and their bus driver, Mr. Petrowsky. I would hope that the students have an interesting day in Regina today and that this trip to the legislature adds to their education and to their experience.

I would point out that I am schedules to meet with them for pictures at 11 a.m.; however, since Social Services *Estimates* will be in process at that time, possibly the

members opposite would be indulgent at that time to allow me a two-minute adjournment to have that process take care of, otherwise I would not be able to meet with them at 11 at all. So at approximately 11 I will be asking for some sort of leave, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the members to welcome these students from Ituna, Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Jailing of Former Credit Union Manager

Mr. Mitchell: — My question is to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, you will be aware that yesterday Gerald Morris was arrested and was taken to jail to serve out a 30-day sentence. He was, of course, the former manager of the Cabri Credit Union who was convicted of unlawfully accepting commissions from a law firm. The two lawyers involved, who are now Mr. Justice Maurice, of the Court of Queen's Bench, and Mr. Geoff Wilson, the Conservative member of parliament from Swift Current, have never been charged with any offence for paying these same commissions, but Mr. Morris, an ordinary citizen, is in jail for receiving those commissions.

Mr. Minister, this leave the people of Saskatchewan wondering about the integrity of our justice system. As a minister, I suggest it's up to you to take steps to restore people's faith in the justice system, and I suggest that you have a further responsibility to provide a satisfactory explanation for this apparent contradiction. Will you do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises an issue that I think perhaps reflects the attitude of the general public in this particular case.

I could advise the hon. member that when this matter first came before me as the Attorney General and the matter was up for decision, one finds himself in the position, as Attorney General, to follow the long-standing tradition of as an elected official, and as the Attorney General, to not to interfere in the decision of the director of public prosecution. That was in fact the recommendation. I think all attorneys general have followed that practice in this province for a long, long time.

I can advise the hon. member that when this matter came before me and the recommendation was not to proceed with charges, I in fact referred that file back to the director of public prosecution, asking that it be reviewed and to determine whether or not in fact it was a proper decision. I did that at that time. The report again came back suggesting that they not proceed with charges. I therefore found myself in a . . . I found myself in a situation, as Attorney General, that you do have to recognize the fact that the director of public prosecutions in this province is the one that makes those decisions, and not me as the Attorney General and as the politician.

I pursued that course, a course that I think has been, as I say, followed, and a practice that has been followed by attorneys general in this province for a long period of time.

I do say, however, I agree with the hon. members that justice appears in the public, as it sometimes does, not to be full and fair.

Mr. Mitchell: — Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, in the circumstances of this case where two such prominent people are involved, and one indeed being a prominent politician of your party, would it not have been more appropriate to have instructed that the charges be laid and allow the courts to make the very judgement that you made yourself?

And can I also ask, as a second question: would it not be appropriate, in your view, in light of the public attitude towards this matter, to give the public an explanation as to how it is that it can be an offence to receive the commissions but not an offence to pay them?

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — I think the hon. member, in raising the issue of should the Attorney General superimpose his views upon the director of public prosecution — the rule is, and the rationale of the rule is, as follows: that if I, as Attorney General, am to interfere in the decision of the director of public prosecution on this issue, do I also interfere on the next issue and the next issue and the next issue? And do you then run the risk of saying that I, as Attorney General, superimposed my political views upon the director of public prosecution.

The individual who made the decision in this particular case was Ken MacKay, who was at that point in time the acting attorney general and also the director of public prosecution, a long-standing employee of the Attorney General's department. He was the one that make the decision. I was advised. I checked with other attorneys general across the country. They advised me that this is an area that you should not interfere with. I acted upon that advice, and that is the way this particular case unfolded.

Mr. Mitchell: — It still leaves unanswered, Minister . . . I mean, you're giving us fresh information, but even that will not be sufficient to satisfy a sceptical public that this case was handled properly, particularly in light of the fact that the law society has attempted to proceed against both of these people and did in fact carry through a hearing against one of them.

Mr. Minister, in these circumstances, let me renew my question: is it not appropriate for you to provide, either through yourself or the director of public prosecutions, an explanation as to how it can be that it is an offence to receive the commissions but not an offence to pay them?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, again I would not see it appropriate for the Attorney General . . . I have no problem with the director of public prosecution explaining as to why that decision was taken. I'm not sure it's appropriate for the Attorney General, though, to stand up and say: this is a decision taken by the director of

public prosecution, and I would then set about to explain how that decision was taken, review the file, etc. I don't think that's appropriate.

I have no problem with the director of public prosecution making a statement as to why the decision was taken in that particular regard.

Mr. Mitchell: — A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, can I simply ask you: will you instruct your director of public prosecutions to make this information public and to provide this explanation to the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, I would be prepared to instruct the director of public prosecution to be as forthcoming with the information as they would in a normal case with regard to where a case is lying. It is not for me to dictate, as you know as a practising lawyer, it is not for me to dictate as to what information the director of public prosecution should make public, and I think that you under that, and the legal system understands that.

Mr. Mitchell: — We are the lawmakers in the province in this Assembly, and we have a collective responsibility here to ensure the integrity of the system . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: — . . . to ensure that people maintain their respect for the law as an essential element of the functioning of our society.

In those circumstances you, as the minister in charge, would have authority to direct your officials, your director of public prosecution, to provide this explanation in a complete and thorough way, not couched in language of . . . as he would in a normal case because this is not a normal case; this is a very serious matter. And I would ask you to make a commitment to us to direct your director of public prosecutions to make a full explanation to the people of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — I've indicated to the hon. member that I would be prepared to request that the director of public prosecutions make a statement with regards to this, and make a statement within the parameters of what is appropriate. And that's not decided by me, it's decided by the director of public prosecutions, what is appropriate in criminal cases of this nature.

Now you talk about we as lawmakers. I think as lawmakers you have to also recognize that what we're dealing with here is a Criminal Code matter which we are not the lawmakers on. The federal government is, or the Parliament of Canada is.

So I have no problem with this, only to say this: that sometimes as Attorney General you find yourself in a situation, you find yourself in a situation where the requirement of your office, and to properly perform the

job that you are given in that office of Attorney General, requires certain restrictions.

And I will live to those restrictions that tradition and the system of justice imposes upon me, and I always must. And I will pursue this case in that traditional way, the way that attorneys general have in the past and, I would suggest, the ways that attorney generals will in the future, to maintain that sense of justice that we have.

Ward System in City Elections

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Urban Affairs, and it concerns his rather peculiar definition of democracy.

Mr. Minister, last week in Moose Jaw you told a meeting of the Saskatchewan chamber of commerce that you had absolute disregard and that you had no concern at all, or respect, for the decisions of the voters of Regina and Saskatoon in plebiscites in support of the ward system.

Now, Mr. Minister, those plebiscites were held four and six years after the beginning of the ward system in those cities. The people had an experience with them. They like the system. They thought it worked for them and they supported it. And so by saying what you said, Mr. Minister, you have accused the people of those cities of being unable to make an informed choice. For that, you should apologize.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now, Mr. Minister, the least you could do is clear the air and tell the dwellers in the cities of Saskatchewan where you stand on this. And so I ask you this question: is it your intention to unilaterally impose a system against the wishes of those people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the preamble of what I said in Moose Jaw he must have received second-hand, because members of the NDP don't traditionally go to chamber of commerce meetings.

But in any event, I have never ever said that I disregard the wishes of the people, and as a result, certainly I don't have any apology to make. And anybody that knows our government, knows our representative's an MLA, know that it's the reverse, in fact, that is true.

We continually talk to the people, and we listen to all of the varying organizations, and we act once we get that response. So I believe that the member has a lot of misinformation, and I don't know where he received it from.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The problem with the minister's answer about listening is that he may listen and he may talk — the problem is that he never hears, and neither do his colleagues.

Now, Mr. Minister, the Regina city council has urged you in resolution to hold a plebiscite, to allow them to hold a

plebiscite on this issue.

Are you aware also, Mr. Minister, that the cities of Weyburn, Saskatoon, Melville, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw and Saskatoon — which I have said — have indicated their support for this objection by the city of Regina to your intention to unilaterally impose a ward system? And if so, Mr. Minister, why do you hold the opinion of those elected municipal officials with such disdain that you're prepared not to listen to them?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that the member has some misinformation. We didn't unilaterally impose the ward system; they did. And they did it following a plebiscite in which the voters of Saskatoon clearly indicated that they did not want the imposition of the ward system, and the NDP government of the day unilaterally imposed the ward system on the city of Saskatoon.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, can I ask you once again: will you heed the advice given to you by all of those cities, which I have indicated to you, who have supported the resolution of the city of Regina. Will you heed that advice and declare in this House today that you're not going to arbitrarily impose your legislation to do away with the ward system, or will you ignore their advice?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would like to once again quote as I have in the past what the present Leader of the Opposition, the member from Riversdale said concerning:

Plebiscites are costly and expensive procedures. Plebiscites are matters which have been established, as a matter of fact can, and I think, be open to some serious criticism.

And he goes on to say that in terms of expenditure by city fathers and in terms of all the other priorities:

Plebiscites will in fact be an expensive and costly opinion poll which will hurt the ratepayers of Saskatoon.

I didn't say that. The Leader of the Opposition said that at the time that they unilaterally imposed the ward system on the city of Saskatoon against the wishes of the city of Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister . . . Mr. Speaker, to the minister who refuses to answer the question and continues to evade it. Well, Mr. Minister, as I listen to you, you sound like a voice in the wilderness and it's fading very fast.

Not only have the cities, whom you ignore, disagreed with you and said you to hold off, but the board of trade in Saskatoon held a survey and also told you that you're

wrong. You have rejected all of those decisions, Mr. Minister, supposedly, it seems.

Now I ask you once again: do you intend to reject any vote results which don't conform to your blind determination to interfere with the electoral system of those municipalities which the people have adopted and have accepted and have said so to you.

Do you propose to ignore those plebiscites that have been taken and those resolutions that have been passed in all of the other cities?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Speaker, he refers to the board of trade in Saskatoon and the fact that a small percentage of people that responded indeed did choose to stay for the ward system.

But let's talk about the Regina chamber of commerce, where they are totally against the ward system. So now you've got our two major cities, and you're talking about two interest groups. Certainly we listen to everybody, Mr. Speaker. We listen to various interest groups, whether they be the chambers of commerce or whoever the group might be.

But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, we listen to the taxpayer. In this day and age, and as times change, if indeed the government chooses that the ward system is an expensive and ineffective way for our cities to operate, if indeed our government believes, Mr. Speaker, that the ward system is an ineffective way to operate a municipality, we will have to deal with it.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — New question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, we've heard you say before about how the ward system is expensive, and somehow you kind of make this argument that it's bad economics to have a ward system.

Mr. Minister, the city manager of the city of Regina has answered you in that argument when he said that the increase in spending for the city of Regina is 2.9 per cent this year with no tax increases, municipal tax increases, and that the largest part of the increase in the cost to the city of Regina is because of increases in the provincial hospital levy, the sales tax and the fuel tax.

Mr. Minister, you're responsible for those kinds of increases of expenditures, and so I ask you: how do you propose to stop the kind of irresponsible approach by your government by doing away with the ward system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Speaker, this government has not yet done away with the ward system, and if we do . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order, order. I believe the minister should have the right to give his answer without too much interruption.

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That member from Quill Lakes every now and then . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. I believe if we just get on with the questions and answers it'll be much better than debate among personal members.

Hon. Mr. Klein: — I believe, Mr. Speaker, that if our government indeed decides to alter the ward system, it will be a responsible position.

Provision of Meals for Hungry Children

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services and it deals with the unacceptable level of poverty in this province. The minister will be aware that Saskatchewan has 64,000 children a year living in poverty, the second highest rate for family poverty in Canada.

In Saskatoon, many people have been asking for over a year now for an expanded school lunch program, and now we have a group in Regina asking for the same thing. That group estimates that to expand the breakfast and lunch programs currently offered at some Regina schools, so that 900 children could be fed, would cost only \$48,000 a year. Mr. Minister, that's less than half of what you pay . . . that's only a day and a half's worth of what your government is spending on empty office space. And my simple question to you is: can you not restructure your priorities so that the hungry children of the city of Regina can be fed?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is inaccurate in his calculation of empty office space, again he is sevenfold out in his calculation. He does not take into account that a lot of that empty space is at Whitespruce where we are reserving it for future use, a drug and alcohol treatment for young people.

The member opposite has statistics that are questionable. When the member opposite was asked by myself to send me the names of hungry children who needed assistance, he said there were hundreds. Mr. Speaker, he sent me one name and we attended to that case. I told the department to go and check into the case and make sure that child is eating regular. One name, they sent over, when they alleged there were hundreds. I think they have a responsibility to give the information to us if there's child neglect, and we will assist in the feeding of those children.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Minister, I have the latest 1987 province-wide statistics for demand at food banks in Saskatchewan, and at the four major, largest centres, urban centres in the province, on a monthly basis last year 12,682 people a month were being fed, and 48 per cent of those were children.

Mr. Minister, in 1987, 36,000 people approximately, in this province, depended at some time on the food banks in one of our four largest urban centres. Now my question to you, Mr. Minister is: are you talking about issuing individual food vouchers to 36,000 people, or are you going to finally realize that you have to start dealing with these problems by changing your unfair social assistance rates and other unfair health and taxation policies in this

province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, first of all, the province of Saskatchewan has the highest welfare rates for children and families in all of Canada, at least in the provinces. I won't go so far as to say in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, but in the provinces of Canada we have the highest rates for children.

Secondly, it is not a surprise that statistics on poverty would reflect, in Saskatchewan, the agricultural situation and our agricultural problems. It is not a surprise that we would have statistics that would show there are a lot of people below what they might call a poverty level.

That does not mean that people are going hungry, but it means that Saskatchewan has the highest percentage of people making their living in agriculture, and we have the highest percentage of native population, and we know that those two groups of society do not have large incomes.

So it is not a surprise that he can find statistics to tell us that things are tough out there because we know agriculture is in trouble, and we know that people on Indian reserves and the native population do not have high incomes. And we are trying to solve those problems, and he is trying to sensationalize them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, Indian people are not even included in your provincial welfare statistics, otherwise they would be much larger than they are.

But Mr. Minister, I want to ask you about the plight of single employable people in this province who are living, as a result of your policies, more than \$6,000 a year below the poverty line. Mr. Minister, your solution has been to give them two-week-on/two-week-off jobs where they can make only \$316 a month in take home pay.

And my question to you, Mr. Minister, is this: why do you feel that you have the right to keep beating up on these single employables while supplying unprecedented corporate welfare to out-of-province oil companies and Alberta millionaire, Peter Pocklington? Will you stop forcing these people to live on the unfair rate of \$316 a month despite the fact that they're working?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Speaker, this government offers people jobs instead of welfare. We have thousands of people who have received jobs rather than having to stay on welfare ...

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Trade Agreement with Marubeni-Hitachi

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to advise the legislature of the progress that's been made in accessing new markets abroad. As the members will be aware, Mr. Speaker, SaskPower purchased two 300-megawatt steam turbine generators for the Shand power station project over one year ago from the Marubeni corporation, manufactured by Hitachi Ltd. Of Japan.

The choice was made for a number of reasons. First, Mr. Speaker, we had used turbines manufactured by Hitachi — I think 10 of the ... the last 10 turbines installed in Saskatchewan were Hitachi turbines — and we found them to be of excellent quality.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Marubeni and Hitachi were willing to locate a turbine manufacturing facility in the province and use Saskatchewan resources to build a product in Saskatoon that can be marketed throughout North America. Construction of the plant is near completion and we look forward to production beginning in early 1989.

In addition, Hitachi's marketing affiliate, Marubeni corporation, signed an \$80 million counter-trade agreement with Agdevco (agricultural development corporation) calling for the purchase to market Saskatchewan products abroad.

A management committee comprised of Marubeni and provincial representatives has completed a review of the progress made to date, and I'm please to announce that Marubeni corporation has increased its purchases of Saskatchewan products to \$86.8 million for the period August 1986 to July 1987, Mr. Speaker.

The credit value towards the counter-trade agreement, because some products are weighted more than others, will be \$34 million. This value is based upon incremental purchases of traditional products, that is, purchases over and above their average buying commitments. Traditional products include wheat, barley, rye, canola, uranium, and malt.

Also included in a new purchase, Mr. Speaker, Marubeni purchased for the first time ever, fine quality paper pulp. This is a new product Marubeni is marketing abroad for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we look forward to their continued assistance in marketing other new products in the future.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, through this agreement we are returning to the province what was paid for the turbines. The management committee will be meeting in one year to review and report on the progress made in the second year of the agreement.

I have written, Mr. Speaker, to the chairman of Marubeni, Mr. Haruna, who incidentally, Mr. Speaker, is an honorary citizen of Saskatchewan, expressing on behalf of the province our appreciation for his company's efforts and co-operation and support for this agreement, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the squawking of members opposite cannot be interpreted as a sign of

endorsement for this kind of arrangement, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's astonishing that this would be the subject of a ministerial statement in this House. I can't think of any other province where this would be the subject of this kind of treatment. Perhaps a press release from some minor official in the department concerned, but certainly not a statement from a minister in the House.

We have been critical, consistently critical of your government, and more so as years go by, for your lack of any kind of an industrial policy. That's an area where the public expected you guys would really be able to do something because they listen to your rhetoric. That's what it's been after six years — just a lot of rhetoric and hot air about the industrialization of Saskatchewan, about the development of industry in this province.

I've quizzed your minister for two years now on the industrial strategy of this government for the province, and the best that he's been able to say is what everybody, what everybody says in every province in the country, every state in the United States, every country in the industrialized world, and that is, we will build on our natural strengths.

And we've been saying, that's good, but everybody's doing that; we need something more than that in this province. We need an effort to do something different, to do something new, to get something going again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 21* — An Act to amend the Cost of Credit Disclosure Act

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Cost of Credit Disclosure Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. Order. I'm sure the members can carry on their discussion privately rather than across the floor of the House.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

STATEMENT BY MR. CHAIRMAN

Ruling on a Point of Privilege

Mr. Chairman: — Before the estimates, I come with a ruling.

Yesterday the member for Regina Centre raised a point of privilege stating that comments made by the Minister of Social Services constituted an attack on a legislative officer.

I have now had an opportunity to review the point raised and the circumstances surrounding it. I first want it clearly understood by all members that it is not the role of the chairman to decide if the privileges of the Assembly have been breached. I refer all hon. members to *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, Fifth Edition, pages 24 and 25:

- (1) A question of order concerns the interpretation to be put upon the rules of procedure and is a matter for the Speaker or, in a committee, for the Chairman to determine.
- (2) A question of privilege, on the other hand, is a question partly of fact and partly of law — the law of contempt of Parliament — and is a matter for the House to determine.
- (3) It follows that though the Speaker can rule on a question of order, he cannot rule on a question of privilege. His function, when a question of privilege is raised, is limited to deciding whether the matter is of such a character as to entitle the motion, which the member who has raised the question desires, to move the priority over the orders of the day.

The role of the chairman is to review the arguments as presented and to determine on the face of it whether a *prime facie* case of privilege has been established. It is thus quite properly up to the Assembly as a whole to decide whether any privileges have been breached.

It is clear from The Ombudsman Act that the Ombudsman is an officer of the House and therefore entitled to those protections outlined in Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, Twentieth Edition, page 162:

Both Houses will treat as breaches of their privileges, not only acts directly tending to obstruct their officers in the execution of their duty, but also any conduct which may tend to deter them from doing their duty in the future.

It is vital, if parliament is to get fair and impartial service from its officers, that these officers must be defended from intimidation while conducting their duties. Members know that it is their responsibility to protect the independent status of officers of the legislature. I refer all members to a precedent of this Assembly on June 24, 1987 respecting the Office of the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk.

With respect to the specific point of privilege raised here, it is questionable that past officers of the House retain the

protection of privilege. I have given serious consideration to this point.

Parliamentary privilege is the protection given to members and officers of the legislature to enable them to carry out their duties without interference. Because the individual in question is no longer an officer of this Assembly, he cannot be obstructed in the execution of parliamentary duties.

While the comments made by the minister may reflect on the credibility of a former Ombudsman, those comments do not necessarily obstruct the present Ombudsman from carrying out his duties. For these reasons I find that this matter, while regrettable, does not constitute a *prima facie* case of privilege.

(1045)

**Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Social Services
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 36**

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I do not rise to comment on your ruling because I am fully aware of what the rules of the House say. And although members opposite, or certainly some members opposite prefer not to pay any attention to the privileges and the rules of the House, I like to believe that members of this House do on this side of the House.

And I want to make some comments on the attack by the member from Melville, the Minister of Social Services yesterday, on the office as well as the officer, of the position of the Ombudsman, that he did last night. I say, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister opposite, with regard to his comments last night, that he was making comments on the Ombudsman when he was indeed the officer in charge of that position. and I think that's a relevant point that this House ought to consider and keep in mind.

I regret very much, Mr. Speaker, that what we saw happen last night was the minister, the member from Melville, who is well-known for the comments he makes, comments of disrespect not only for this legislature and the institution as it is, but minorities and individuals all over the province who are unable to defend themselves. That by his comments, Mr. Chairman, he was demeaning the very institution of the legislature, as well as the institution of the Ombudsman.

And so I regret that this matter even had to come before us today. I regret that even it had to be raised yesterday by my colleague, the member from Regina Centre, who did so out of the fact and the knowledge that the rights of this legislature and the rights of each and every member of this legislature is threatened when a member of this legislature begins to attack the integrity of any officer of this legislature, as the member from Melville did last night.

And he stands accused, and although, Mr. Chairman, the ruling is as it is, and I don't want to get into that, I think it is well-known, and the record will show that this member

did indeed attack the very institution of the Ombudsman which is an institution of this Legislative Assembly.

And therefore, Mr. Chairman, he was wrong and he ought to have apologized. And if he has any sense of decency, any sense of respect for this legislature, he will so do in spite of what the ruling may be on this issue. And we will find out whether he has that kind of stature and that kind respect for this institution when he speaks on his comments of last night.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the history of the member from Melville is well-known. He very deliberately and very regularly, not only in this House but outside of this House, maligns minorities and individuals who in most cases cannot defend themselves. We should not accept that, as responsible legislators.

An officer of the House, Mr. Speaker, does not have a forum. An officer of the House does not have a forum to defend him or herself. Therefore it is the responsibility of the members of this House to make sure that those kinds of attacks which we heard last night, do not take place.

Mr. Speaker, the member deliberately cast unfounded reflections on the professional integrity, who I submit was an officer at the time that the Minister was taking about. He was talking about the Ombudsman at the time when this gentleman was the Ombudsman. he did so at some length.

And I regret to say, Mr. Chairman, that this is only one example of many which have transpired in recent months, which show the complete contempt by not only that member but other members of the Executive Council, to this legislature, and those requirements that it puts upon us as elected representatives of the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Not long ago, the member from Kindersley, last year, made comments derogatory to the Legislative Law Clerk and attacked the Legislative Law Clerk. I must say, at least that member, when it was indicated that he had acted in a way that is not acceptable, had the decency to rise and apologize. And we accepted that, and we hoped that it would never happen again.

But now the member from Melville does so again last night on an individual, in this House, who cannot defend himself.

An Hon. Member: — No evidence.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — He has no evidence. He simply does it, Mr. Speaker, in line with other attacks which the member from Melville has made on the Ombudsman's office which he made in January of 1987, when the Ombudsman reported about certain problems which he had detected with the Department of Social Services regarding foster-children and the kind of conditions that they were faced with. And when he was confronted with the report, Mr. Chairman, rather than taking it and trying to follow up on it and understand that maybe there was a problem he should deal with, he proceeded to attack the Ombudsman.

Now, Mr. Chairman, this is an unfortunate trend that we see happening on behalf of this government. Whenever there is even the smallest element of criticism, rather than listening and indeed hearing, they choose to attack and destroy.

Recently, a director of a study on water in Saskatchewan was suspended for two weeks because he dared to make a professional opinion on the water situation in Saskatchewan with regard to the Rafferty-Alameda project.

Just the other day at the correctional institute a guard was suspended because he dared question his own ability to administer drugs to inmates in that institution and therefore made himself liable, because of policy of this government. He's suspended.

Now we have non-profit organizations, groups who are trying to be helpful, people trying to provide counselling to battered women, all kinds of these non-profit organizations, non-government agencies, being issued in the agreement that the minister has written up, gag orders. So they either have to take what the government says and what the minister says and lump it. They don't dare comment on it and try to get policy changes because that minister will cut off their funds.

Now what kind of a society, Mr. Chairman, is that, that we are living in under this government when all of those kinds of threats are imposed and given to individuals and to organizations and to groups, day after day after day. I fear that kind of a society, and so should every member who has any sense of what a democracy is all about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I say to you, Mr. Chairman, this is an unhappy day, because it highlights once again the kind of disregard that this government has for the institution of parliament. When the institution of parliament is threatened, every single citizen in Saskatchewan is threatened. The rights and the privilege of citizens are no longer safe and secure. When the Minister of Social Services can say to non-government agencies: if you say one word, or if you question at any time the policies which I want you to abide by, I'm going to cut off your funds, then I say, Mr. Chairman, we are all threatened — we are all threatened.

An Hon. Member: — You're being self-righteous.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — And this is . . . the member from Rosthern talks about being self-righteous. He doesn't understand, Mr. Chairman. He thinks this is funny. He's a new member, but he's been here long enough to know — he's been here long enough to know the importance of the integrity of the legislature and the importance of the integrity of the officers of the legislature. And for him . . . if he want to speak on this, he can get up in his seat. But for him to sit in his seat and laugh at the legislature, and laugh at the non-government organizations who now have to live under a gag order, I say he's just as irresponsible as the member from Melville, the Minister of Social Services.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now these are people, Mr. Chairman, who were elected in a democratic system to uphold the democratic rights of the citizens of Saskatchewan. Instead they attack them and undermine them.

And it's not just the member from Kindersley who tried that, Mr. Chairman, last year. It's not just the member from Melville who again did it yesterday — and he's done it numerous times. He has a habit of doing this; he's the government hit man, it seems. Go out there and attack people.

Now this is the guy, this is the member who talks about morality every second day. I say to him, I say to him: what is moral, Mr. Minister, about taking the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman's office and attacking it the way you have? How can you say about this office, Mr. Chairman, that the . . . that because the Ombudsman criticized your department, which was his role to do, which you should have taken as helpful advice so that you could follow up. . . . Instead of doing that, you say that the Ombudsman was indulging in politics and that he's — if I recall from what I was . . . reported to me yesterday — that the Ombudsman was slandering foster-parents.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that in itself is slanderous, and if the minister had any kind of courage of his convictions, he'd say it outside this legislature. But he won't. He won't because he'll hide behind the immunity of himself as a member who will speak in here.

Now this is just another example of many. We have had now, Mr. Chairman, for over seven months, orders for return ordered by this legislature that have yet to be tabled in this House. It is information that the public has a right to know. Over seven months. And when, some over two weeks ago, I asked the House Leader on the government side of the House, will he table those orders for return, he said in his usual offhanded way that he would check into it. He has yet to report to this House, because he has no respect for what this House requires of government and of all of us as members.

We have had, from the year 1986-1987, the *Public Accounts*, which the Minister of Finance has had in his hand since April 4, yet to be tabled in this House — another example of disregard for the very institution and requirements of this institution.

Now, I don't care whether it is members on the opposition or whether it is the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg or whether it is members on the government side of the House; when it comes to protecting the democratic rights of citizens in Saskatchewan, we all ought to be concerned. When it comes, Mr. Chairman, to besmirching the integrity of the officers of this legislature, we all ought to be concerned.

And if the minister has any sense of the terrible mistake he made last night . . . And I will give him the benefit of the doubt, and I'll say that he possibly made a mistake. I've said earlier that it was deliberate. But that's fine, I won't debate that. But if he has any sense of the damage and the

harm that he is doing along with some others' actions that this government has taken, he will stand up today and he will apologize and he will withdraw, so that his doesn't become even a worse and further precedent that we seem to be seeing developing by members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1100)

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That was rather a long question and warrants a rather long reply.

First of all, I hope that the people of Saskatchewan realize what the NDP are really like and what their greatest concerns are, and that is concerns about things that happened two and three years ago, and that the people of Saskatchewan, their greatest fear should be that we ever have an NDP government again. And they have a prime example of how the members opposite conduct themselves and how they conduct personal attacks on everyone within earshot. And that's an example of what kind of a government we might have some time in the future should an election ever go against the interests of the people of Saskatchewan.

Well first of all, Mr. Chairman, I will defend foster-parents at all times against anyone, anywhere. And I don't care what the position of that person is, I will defend foster-parents when I believe they need defending, and that's what I have done.

Secondly, there is some concern about my defence of foster-parents yesterday evening. I can say, Mr. Chairman, that I did not use unparliamentary language, that I stated an opinion. And I can say, Mr. Chairman, that I respect officers of this Assembly, and I even respect former officers of the Assembly. However, there has to be a balancing of rights. And I will criticize former officers of the Assembly, and in the future, if necessary, I would criticize present officers of this Assembly if they engage in public discussion and in public debate that is the realm of politicians.

And I submit to the members of this Assembly that the rights of the members to speak freely are above the privileges of the officers of this Assembly. And when the officers of this Assembly get engaged in public debates, which they should not be part of, then they are engaging in politics, and no officer of the Assembly should ever be engaged in politics — and for the most part they have not — for the most part they have not, and I don't think they will in the future. But if that happens, as it happened in the past, then I will speak and stand for foster-parents if there is a public debate.

So, Mr. Speaker, we respect freedom of speech in this country. The freedom of speech of members of the legislature is paramount to anyone in this society. This forum has to have absolute freedom of speech with the exception of the use of unparliamentary language and personal attacks on members attacking each other. That is a principle of democracy.

And the privileges of officers of an Assembly cannot be

greater than the privileges of the members because this is a democracy governed by elected members and not by officials. And so therefore, yes, we respect the privileges of officers of this Assembly, and they respect the privileges of members, and it is not a privilege of the officers of this Assembly to engage in public debate, and I want to make that quite clear. And the members opposite should know that, that in a free and democratic society there is freedom of speech in the legislature.

And the members opposite who write things and have their friends say in public that cabinet ministers cannot say that, they should not be allowed to say such and such, or this or that — they advocate freedom of speech for people who dissent with the views of this government, but they do not, the members opposite, do not permit freedom of speech for elected members of the Assembly. They try to deny a cabinet minister freedom of speech.

They suggest, they write editorials or letters to the editor suggesting that a cabinet minister has less freedom of speech than an ordinary citizen. Certainly, when I am elected to this Assembly I do not lose my rights of freedom of speech. And within this Assembly we have privileges of speaking freely. We have privileges of speaking freely as to what we think the law of this province should be, what the policies of this province should be. We have freedom of speech subject to certain orders of decorum and behaviour.

And it is unbelievable that the NDP, and the people that write letters on their behalf, write to papers saying that cabinet ministers should not be able to say this. Yes, they can write and say we disagree with what that minister said, or we disagree with what the MLA said. That is the freedom of speech.

An Hon. Member: — Who wrote the letter?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — That is what free, democratic debate is all about. And the members opposite say, who wrote the letter? They would know who wrote the letter. They have people who write letters for people. They would know exactly who writes these letters. They organize these letters.

The members opposite should understand and respect the fundamental principles of freedom that everyone has freedom of speech within the law of Canada, and that when I am elected as a member I do not lose my freedom of speech. That they should understand . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Now somebody shouts out there and calls me Mr. Zundel. I say to the member opposite, my name is Schmidt, and I'm not ashamed of it, and I don't need the members opposite calling me a Mr. Zundel. Mr. Zundel is his own business. Now you say you didn't call me Mr. Zundel.

An Hon. Member: — Does he have freedom of speech?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Does Mr. Zundel have freedom of speech? Yes, within the laws of Canada.

Don't you stand over there and call me Zundel. That gives you an example, an example, Mr. Chairman, of the mentality of the members opposite who call themselves a New Democratic Party, and an example of what kind of a democracy they would give us, where freedom of speech is for them, but not for anyone else. Freedom of speech is for New Democrats, but not for anyone else.

That is the kind of hypocrisy and the kind of fear that we fear in Saskatchewan, that we have a new democracy. We are quite happy with the old democracy. We don't need a new democracy that prevents people from speaking, that has members opposite calling people names, making personal attacks on members in this Assembly, having them shouting from their seat, calling somebody a Zundel or calling somebody a Nazi.

I have been subject to those kind of personal attacks. And yes, I can accept that. I can take that. But they shouldn't stand here righteous, holier-than-thou, saying they are a New Democratic Party when they don't respect democratic rights of freedom of speech. There has to be a limit, a limit to the kind of distortions the NDP bring to this Assembly.

Mr. Chairman, I heard them call me Zundel. My name is Schmidt, and I'm not ashamed of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — With respect, Mr. Chairman, to foster-parents, I indicated yesterday evening that our record of assisting foster-parents, in bringing in new training programs and increasing the rates, in developing a spirit of co-operation between foster-parents and the government so that we can serve the children in need — our record is so good that they try to cover it with their rhetoric about attack on people and attack on officers of the Assembly.

I reserve the right to defend foster-parents at any time that they need defending, and I reserve the right to attack the NDP every day of the year, and I will do it because it is necessary.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, we have truly seen the measure of the man. And I want to say, Mr. Chairman, it does not measure up very well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — This is a member, Mr. Chairman, the minister talks about freedom of speech, but he has no sense of what freedom of speech is all about. Freedom of speech is about honesty. Freedom of speech, Mr. Chairman, is about talking about the facts as they are. Freedom of speech is allowing non-government organizations the right to say: the policy of your government is wrong and we think you should change it. Freedom of speech is the right for those organizations and any individual citizen of this province to be able to disagree with the government.

An Hon. Member: — Without fear of repercussions.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Without any fear of repercussions.

We no longer have freedom of speech when the minister puts in his contract with non-government organizations a provision that says they have no right to question. That's taking away freedom of speech.

Freedom of speech is gone when a guard at the correctional institute is disciplined and has his job taken away with a suspension for a period of time because he thinks he should not do something for which he is not qualified, for which he is then legally liable—serving medication to people in that correctional institute.

Freedom of speech is gone when a senior officer in charge of a study on water supplies in Saskatchewan is suspended for two weeks for making an honest and professional statement about the supply of water for a certain project in Saskatchewan. That's what freedom of speech is all about. Freedom of speech is being responsible for what one says.

Now part of this whole concept of the freedom of speech, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman, is for minister of the Crown to set an example. And when ministers of the Crown who bring laws to the legislature and are the custodians of those laws then turn around and time after time break those laws, they are destroying the idea of freedom of speech which is the basic tendency of this democracy.

The rules of this House say — and I'm very sorry that the minister refused to talk about it — but the rules of this House say — and there's all kind of precedent — that no member of this House should try to attack the integrity of an officer of this legislature.

That House is passed by the members of this rule, of this House, and that minister is a member of this House, so he's breaking his own rules. He's breaking his own rules. Now what kind of a minister, who would even have an inkling of what moral values are all about, would pass on rules and then break them. That is beyond the whole realm of freedom of speech when members of this House begin to do that. Freedom of speech does not mean we can break the law. He's breaking the law, Mr. Speaker.

Freedom of speech does not mean that any individual citizen of this land can defame other people. That's not freedom of speech, but that's what's happening from the government members opposite, and particularly this minister. Freedom of the speech does not allow us to disseminate hate, but that's been happening on the part of this government and this Executive Council time and time again. Freedom of speech does not allow the slander of officers of this legislature, but that minister slandered an officer and the Office of the Ombudsman. and he refuses even to acknowledge it and speak on it.

Freedom of speech does not allow for the deliberate development of intolerance and hate which seems to be the strategy of this government, led by that minister in recent months.

(1115)

Freedom of speech has limitations too. And when it is used . . . when that umbrella is used to destroy individuals, then it's no longer freedom of speech. It is

then only a case of where the most powerful, whether it's physical, economic, or any other criteria, begin to dominate and have society work for them at the expense of those who don't have that power . . . freedom of speech does not allow us to do that.

It's only people in government or not in government, people in the legislature or not in the legislature, who will begin to use this argument, freedom of speech, to attack people who cannot defend themselves, as has happened here.

And I ask the minister one more time. We don't need this debate in particular. All he should do in order to protect the integrity of the office of this legislature is withdraw those remarks in which he attacked the Ombudsman, at the time when he was the Ombudsman exercising his duties, and then we can go on with our work.

Because by doing what he has done, Mr. Chairman, he has muzzled the present Ombudsman. he has served notice to the Ombudsman today that if he ever, at any time, chooses to point out to his department that some of their administration of policy is unfair and is hurting some people and is wrong, then that Ombudsman will expect to be attacked by the minister opposite under the pretence of freedom of speech. And for that reason, it is important that the record be clear and the minister withdraw those comments so that that threat to the present Ombudsman and any other officer of this legislature is lifted, because as long as that threat is there, it undermines the very functioning of the legislative process and the whole principle of democracy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, first of all I wish to acknowledge that I received a note from one of the members opposite indicating that he did not call me a Zundel. It's all I could hear over the shouting in the Assembly was that somebody was shouting Zundel on the other side, and if the member opposite said that he did not call me a Zundel, then I accept that member's explanation that he did not call me a Zundel.

I really don't know what the other members might have been saying, but I accept that member's explanation because that individual member is an honourable man, and I do have respect for the honour of some of the members opposite, and that member in particular — and he knows who he is, he's nodding his head — I accept that he did not call me a Zundel.

But I hear in the melee that goes on in this Assembly, somebody shouting Zundel from the other side, and if he's now defining that, I will accept him as not having intended anything by that, but I don't really know who shouted it, and I know that that member wouldn't do that, but he others I'm not so sure about.

So you know, in the confusion of the debate here, it's hard to tell exactly who is saying what over there, but I did hear them shout Zundel from the other side. So I accept that member's explanation.

The other thing that I have to point out, Mr. Chairman, is

that — I'm quoting now from the Wednesday, January 14, 1987 Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* — and there's a quote of the former Ombudsman that says:

Most of the problems with the present system exist because the government isn't willing to give the issue the priority and effort it deserves.

And the next paragraph says:

"That won't likely happen unless the public puts pressure on the government to act," Tickell said in an interview.

So here we have an officer of the legislature telling the public as to what their political opinions should be, as what they should do politically, and I suggest that an officer of the legislature should not be doing that, and I've never known of any other case where an officer of the legislature has done that.

In addition, I quote from the *Leader-Post* of January 15, 1987, and these are only quotes:

Social Services Minister Grant Schmidt is irritated because he says Ombudsman David Tickell did not have the common decency to give him a report on child care system before releasing it publicly Wednesday. Reached by telephone in his Melville constituency after the report was released . . .

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Chairman, you have invoked the rule before about referring to members by name. The member just did it. I wonder if you would draw his attention to the rules.

Mr. Chairman: — I would ask members not to use members' names, whether they be their own or other members. Use the position or constituency.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, you mean I can't use my own name in the Assembly?

Mr. Chairman: — It has been ruled by the Speaker and by the Chair that quotes are not allowed . . . even in quotes, you're not allowed to use members' names.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Thank you. I'll expunge my name from the quote:

Social Services Minister (blank — we know who he is) is irritated because he says Ombudsman David Tickell did not have the common decency to give him a report on the child care system before releasing it publicly Wednesday. Reached by telephone in his Melville constituency after the report was released, (and I change the word — he) said he had not seen the report, was not prepared to make a special trip to Regina Wednesday to get a copy, and therefore could not immediately comment on many of the recommendations. On Tuesday a number of media outlets were given advance copies of the report on "urgent need to improve a system in crisis," and (the member for Melville) grumbled that common decency should

suggest that Tickell should have given it to him on Tuesday when he was in Regina at the legislature.

So lastly, I quote — and I quote from the *Leader-Post*, Regina, Thursday, January 15, 1987. I quote from the article of Dale Eisler, who is an authority on many things, and I'm sure he will not object to that. But I quote, and I think Mr. Eisler — if I'm not entitled to say in the legislature what I have said, then I think Mr. Eisler is in even greater danger in saying what he had said because he wrote in paragraph two of that article:

With his second term as Provincial Ombudsman ending in April, Tickell made a conscious decision he was not going to go quietly.

Now I think no more needs to be said on this. Officers of this Assembly have traditionally been responsible, and officers of this Assembly have traditionally not gotten involved in public debates, have not gotten involved in politics. I say that they should not. And if I have to defend citizens like the Saskatchewan foster-parents from comments of a public official, than I will do it when necessary. I've give you these examples so that people will recall what actually had taken place at the time, and I believe those quotes to be accurate.

So when the member opposite suggests that I am breaking the law, he is challenging the ruling of the Chair, and challenging the fundamental principles of democracy that an elected member is entitled to speak for or against whatever that member believes is right.

So I deny breaking any laws of this Assembly; I deny breaking any laws of Canada, and therefore I believe that we have had an open and public debate on this topic here, and that's the way it should be.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Chairman, I have attended this institution for quite some time now, and I believe that over the years I've developed an appreciation for this institution and the people that make this institution operate.

The people that make this institution operate are the Clerks, the Ombudsman, the Provincial Auditor, the Legislative Counsel — they're all independent, non-partisan officers of this Assembly.

Now if in fact the minister wishes to cloud the issue by drawing in all kinds of extraneous material that has no relationship to what happened last night, that is his problem but I think all members of the Assembly, and I include members on the other side of the House, would bite their tongue rather than make the comments that the Minister of Social Services made yesterday, I know that they respect this institution, and they would not put themselves in that position, let alone attacking its officers, but attacking the positions of those officers.

What the Minister of Social Services did yesterday — and I don't know whether it's clumsiness or whether it's deliberateness; I haven't decided on that yet, and I'll let the public decide whether in fact it's clumsiness or it's intentional and deliberate. He has again clearly signalled to the officers of this Assembly — and I include all the

officers in this Assembly, because none of them can escape this — he has warned them that in the future he will attack; he will attack them. That's not a position that any members of this Assembly should allow this Assembly to be put in.

The member for Kindersley was in a difficult position with regard to attack of an officer of this Assembly, and I give the member for Kindersley full credit for standing up before this House and saying, I apologize.

Apologies, according to the books that govern this Assembly, the rule books that govern this Assembly, must be so generous, so liberal in their terms that they cannot be misconstrued as anything but a sincere apology. We have heard nothing of that from this minister.

This minister feels himself free to go to Saskatoon, interfere in the small-business scene with directives from his office; he sees it his position to put legislation before this House that will gag non-governmental organizations; he feels free to roam around and attack the positions of the officers of this Assembly.

This minister may continue to do that, Mr. Chairman, but he does it at his peril and at the peril of this institution, and I have a great deal of respect for this institution. I know there are members on both sides of this House that have a lot of respect for this institution and its officers, and would not attack those officers or those positions at any time unless there was clear evidence that something should be done about the officers.

I say, Mr. Speaker, there is no evidence at this time that that position should have been attacked. It is the imagination of the minister's mind that leads him to do that. And as I say, I do not know whether it's deliberate or whether it's just plain clumsiness of this particular minister, but I know there are other ministers on that side of the House that would not utter those words under any circumstances.

I was a minister of the government, and I had the Ombudsman bring unpleasant news to me about my department. I said nothing about it; I did not attack the Ombudsman. I said to my officials in the department, see if you can straighten up that problem, and they straightened up the problem. In retrospect, I was pleased that that officer of the Assembly listed that the department I was running at that time had made some errors that should be corrected, and they were corrected.

(1130)

I know that ministers in the government that I served in also had messages brought to them by the Ombudsman that they found unpleasant, and I know that some ministers in this government have probably had messages brought to them by the Ombudsman which they, at the time, were uncomfortable with. But they were big enough, they had the kind of mettle that makes good ministers and makes good members, and they took the message in the light that it was brought to them, that it was the job of that official to note that certain corrections or changes were required.

That's what his position mandated him to do. And those ministers, on both sides of the House, accepted that word and did what had to be done. And I thank them because they honour this institution and its officers and positions.

And I say it's a sorry day for this institution when this minister continues, continues his interference, not only in this Chamber but outside this Chamber in affairs that are no business of his, and he should keep his hands out of them. And it's unfortunate that this minister cannot see that. I wish he could but, however, I have no control over that.

I just wanted to say, Mr. Chairman, it is a sorry day for this institution when the minister made the kind of statement that he made and refuses to back off.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, it's a sorry day for this institution when officers of this institution get involved in politics. And I don't think we'll see that again in the future.

Well, Mr. Chairman, the members opposite have talked about a contract with non-governmental agencies that my department has proposed to these agencies, most of which signed the contract. And they have done some grandstanding on this topic and they think that . . . There's a headline in Saskatoon's paper today, "Schmidt claimed issuing gag orders." Now at least the headline says "claimed." Because I've not issued any gag orders to anyone.

I have a copy of page 5 of the agreement which the members opposite have been complaining about. And what I have in this agreement is, "Requirements of Agency":

The Agency agrees that:

- (A) Its Directors and employees shall treat as confidential any information received with respect to any client of the agency.

That, I indicated yesterday, is the policy of our department, and I will be not changing that sentence.

The second sentence, I agree, is a bit ambiguous. And it says:

The Agency further agrees to treat as confidential any policy information provided by the Department of Social Services.

Now the member for Saskatoon University considers that sentence to be a gag order of some sort. I agree that my department could have drafted it clearer. And I have indicated to the media yesterday when they asked me about this, I gave them a copy, I said I have nothing to hide. I said, I am looking at an amendment to that second sentence to make it clear as to what our policy actually is.

The department advises me they were concerned that the 191 non-governmental organizations would re-publish the policies of the department and that these policies would not be current, because they are changed from time to time. And it's all we ask is that current information

go out and that it be accurate and that it be current. And we do not want, as the NDP have done on many occasions, to have inaccurate information or information, that is not current, put before the minds of the public so that they concern themselves over things that are no longer part of the policy.

I agree, that sentence will have to be reworded. And what I will do is reword that sentence to reflect that we don't mind having the non-governmental organizations having the policy information; we don't mind if they pass on that information to other people, but we will have to insist that they pass on only current and accurate information.

Now this is not a major issue, but something that the members opposite try to sensationalize. And so in the *Star-Phoenix* of today there is an article on this, and the headline is a bit misleading but the story in the article is quite accurate. They even go so far as to interview on Evanna Simpson, president of the Regina Transition House, and I quote:

. . . said her agency is negotiating with Social Services on the issue in efforts to define what has to be confidential and whether change are possible.

And the answer is yes, changes are possible, but not just for one agency. The change I make will be by letter, amending that section. I will send it to all of the agencies, saying this is what the clause now means, and the wording will be quite clear.

She said she was reluctant to comment on the issue for fear of jeopardizing talks with the government about it. (And she said) "I'm a little disappointed that Peter brought it up," she said.

I think she was referring to the member from Saskatoon University. And so I suggest that he has even done a disservice to the people who are trying to solve this wording problem and try to bring up a sensational topic here to get a headline that says, "Schmidt claimed issuing gag orders . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, please. Order, please. I think that by now most members are aware of the fact that the Speaker and the Chairman have rules on numerous occasions about the use of members' names, whether it be their own name or a member opposite or even initials. So I would ask all members to try to remember that for future occurrences. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the headlines says — and it says we can't go "beep", and the members opposite suggest we go "blank". The headline says, Social Services minister claimed issuing gag orders, and I've edited it for the purpose of the legislature. And the individual quoted says

that I'm a little disappointed that "beep, blank" (the member for Saskatoon University) brought it up (she said).

So I apologize for using a first name of someone or for using my own name. Sometimes we forget ourselves

because we're so used to names.

The point here is that the NDP are into sensational politics over one sentence in a letter that my staff drew up. And they're not all lawyers like I am, and I can't draft up every contract that they put out, and I can't personally read every detail in all of the contracts and policies they put out. But I can say that I am the chief lawyer in charge of the Department of Social Services and that there will be an amendment to this clause so it is no longer ambiguous.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we are happy on this side of the House to see that the Minister of Social Services is finally going to relent and amend this part of the contract that he obviously has with all non-government organizations in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, you say that the previous wording was confusing. I think that, as you've indicated yourself, the previous wording was very clear. It said that:

The Agency further agrees to treat as confidential any policy information provided by the Department of Social Services.

And surely even you, sir, would have to acknowledge that that could easily be interpreted as meaning that non-government organizations were not free to inform the public of policy changes by your department, or to criticize policy changes that they might think to be unfair. And I'm very pleased that you're going to be removing that provision in every NGO contract. I thank you for that announcement here this morning, and I hope that we can look forward to seeing that policy change implemented with all haste.

Mr. Minister, I want to turn to another subject, and that is the question that we were discussing this morning of child hungry in the province, and not just hungry children but hungry adults as well, Mr. Minister. And I was sharing with you during question period some of the latest statistics for the province with respect to this very serious problem.

You'll be aware, Mr. Minister, that we have five food banks functioning in the province of Saskatchewan. The figures that I gave you this morning did not include the statistics for the Lloydminster food bank. Of course that food bank is serving residents in Alberta as well as in Saskatchewan, so I didn't think it fair to include it. But that food bank is providing food hampers to, on a monthly basis, in the case of the month of March, 196 children and 198 adults. But it's the province-wide figures, Mr. Minister that surely you must acknowledge are unacceptable for any government. And I want to go into these in a little more detail.

Mr. Minister, there were in 1987, 2,174,902 pounds of food that were given by food banks in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, and Moose Jaw to needy members of the public. In the case of the city of Regina, Mr. Minister, we have a situation where 80,261 individuals were provided with food during the year. Now I want to clarify these statistics because I don't want them to be misconstrued because, as I mentioned earlier in question period,

approximately 36,000 people in this province depended on the food bank last year. This \$80,261 refers to multiple use. In other words, if every time somebody came into the Regina food bank needing food, whether it be an adult or a child, that record was kept, you would have 80,261 people being served. However a lot of that, Mr. Minister, is repeat business, so to speak.

But I think that that figure demonstrates the seriousness of the problem in the city of Regina, Mr. Minister. And the Regina food bank records show that over 52 per cent of the people being served in the city of Regina are children, and that more than a million pounds of food, Mr. Minister, was distributed in the city of Regina.

And I've given you the Saskatoon figures earlier in this legislature, but the figures for Moose Jaw and Prince Albert, Mr. Minister, are also of real concern. In the city of Moose Jaw, 87,755 pounds of food were distributed last year to needy persons. In the city of Prince Albert, 143,129 pounds of food were distributed to needy persons.

Surely, Mr. Minister, these figures demonstrate the urgent need for your government to address this issue of hunger in our urban centres, and hunger that is no doubt hidden hunger in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister. Just because there isn't a food bank in a rural community doesn't mean that there aren't people in that community going hungry.

Now, Mr. Minister, as I indicated to you in question period, the Regina child hunger coalition is estimating that the cost of putting a mid-morning . . . giving children a mid-morning snack of apple and cheese or tuna and crackers in half of Regina's 19 inner-city schools would cost about \$60,000 a year for the school year. And they also estimate that expanding the breakfast and lunch programs already offered at Regina schools, expanding those would cost in the range of about \$48,000 a year to provide 900 meals a week to children in need.

Now, Mr. Minister, if you add those two figures together, that's only a cost of \$108,000 for the city of Regina.

Mr. Minister, will you now indicate that you are prepared to find \$108,000 for the children of the city of Regina in your budget to expand school lunch programs and to put a snack program in 19 schools in this city?

(1145)

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, food banks are a good thing; they help people who are in need for unforeseen circumstances. But they should not be used for political purposes by the NDP. They try to take a charity and turn it into a political campaign.

The people of Saskatchewan should know that welfare rates do not correlate with the existence of food banks. Approximately 85 per cent . . . now maybe the ratio has gone down a little in the last year, but when we last calculated it, approximately 85 per cent of Canada's food banks are in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. And these provinces are among the highest paying welfare provinces in Canada. Saskatchewan has the highest rates for families; Alberta

has the second highest rate for families. I could look up the information for Alberta.

Eighty-five per cent of the food banks are in these three western provinces which have the highest rates, Conservative governments and NDP opposition. Now there is two possibilities here, and maybe it's a combination of those. Maybe people in western Canada are more generous than other parts of Canada, or maybe the NDP are trying to use food banks for political purposes.

I say food banks are good for people, to help people, but the NDP should not use them for political purposes and should not organize them for political purposes. The NDP tried to organize a food bank in my city of Melville, Saskatchewan, and the citizens found that people were having enough to eat in Melville, Saskatchewan, and there was no food bank organized.

I would not be opposed to the organization of a food bank in Melville if the need exists. If the citizens wish to organize one, that's all right with me. But I discouraged the NDP from organizing one for political purposes in the home city of the Minister of Social Services; and that's what the NDP tried to do in Melville, and they were not successful. They tried to do it in Melville because that's where the Minister of Social Services lives.

The next observation is that we have the highest rates for children in Canada, and that the minister refers to the problem of hunger in the inner city of Regina. I can't understand why the problem should be concentrated in the inner city of Regina, because the welfare recipients in Regina area dispersed throughout the city; they're not only living in the inner city.

And the rates are the same in the inner city as they are in the outer extremities of the city. The rates are the same throughout the city. So there's no reasons why there should be a concentration of hunger in the inner city and there should not be hunger in the suburbs of the city.

So the NDP fail to explain. They say it's a lack of money. If it's a lack of money, then why isn't this a problem throughout the city? It's only in the inner centre. And I suggest that child hunger is related to social problems and not to cash being paid out, and I have indicated that with respect to the statistics. And then the member opposite gets into, there are hungry adults in the city. And I would hope that there are no hungry adults.

I'll give you an example of our idea of helping people get jobs, teaching them to get jobs. In Regina and Saskatoon we've conducted a job search training program, which the members opposite have highly criticized as forcing people to go and learn how to get a job. And it's all we're asking there is to sit and learn, and they say that it is wrong to ask people to come and get a job, or even they say it's wrong to force people to learn how to get a job.

And so what has happened is that . . . He refers to hungry adults. And I might point out that when you go for this training, you get a free lunch. It's probably the only place you can get a free lunch, but you get, in addition to your welfare rates that you have, you get your transportation to

come down and a free lunch. The taxpayers provide, in addition, a lunch that is not a cost to the person taking the course.

So if they are hungry and they want to get a job and they want to get a free lunch, I encourage them to come to our three-week job search training program. But the problem is that out of 76 invited in February, only 26 came for the training and the free lunch; 50 did not. Out of 46 invited in March, only 22 came for the training and the free lunch; 24 did not. Out of the 60 invited in . . . well in April there were two courses. The total results are that there were 237 people invited to come and get the training course and receive a free lunch; 148 chose not to.

Now if you're telling me that those were 148 hungry adults, I'm saying they turned down a free lunch and an opportunity to learn how to get a job, and that the people that did go, many of them have received jobs, some of them well-paying jobs.

In addition, when we offered work to people to gain experience, some of those that went and took that experience now have good jobs. Two people from Prince Albert are working t the Weyerhaeuser mill — and I know that's a dirty word to you — but they're working at the plant site at the construction wages that are being paid to the unionized workers there.

People at Par Industries — if you say they're hungry adults — they can make more working at Par Industries than they can simply staying on welfare. We calculated so that they would make more because we believe there should be an incentive to work.

And 71 of those people that you allege are hungry adults quit; 30 found other employment — that's good — and I bet you they're not hungry now; 19 were fired — you say 19 of those hungry adults were fired because they wouldn't get the job done — 18 decided to go to training or school, and then we educate them to get jobs in the future.

At Meewasin, in your very own city — and you say you are an environmentalist, and you accuse us of making people clean up your park. You should thank us for having people clean up your park. And you say it's demeaning for them to clean up your park. Somebody had to do it. If you say it's demeaning, then who's going to clean up the park? Are we just going to let the garbage build up because it's demeaning for people to have to go out and clean up a park?

In your own city, at the Meewasin Valley, 57 adults, that you allege were hungry, quit; 17 found other employment, and I congratulate them for that; 12 were dismissed, and I say I hope they do better on their next job.

I have given you examples of what can be done when a government has policies, that do community work, that provide training, that clean up the environment, that build roads in the North on training programs.

There are people right now in La Loche . . . The welfare rate in La Loche went down 11 per cent last month

because we put in a program to have the welfare recipients working on heavy machinery, cutting bush and building a road that has never been there and that they asked for. We are now paying them to build a road that they wanted, and the welfare rate in La Loche went down 11 per cent last month.

And you're telling me that you are opposed to welfare reform. Well you should tell me what you're in favour of. Are you opposed to having people building a road for themselves rather than sitting on welfare and saying, somebody come and build a road for us? They are happy to build a road for themselves. They asked for the road; we got them the equipment; we're paying them to build the road instead of having those 11 per cent on welfare.

And we will do more of those kind of things because I'm certain the people of Saskatchewan do not deny that people should be encouraged to help themselves. And in this case it costs the taxpayers no extra money. We are simply paying them to do something for themselves rather than do nothing. And I can't see how even the NDP can be opposed to that.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, we once again this morning in the Assembly heard two unbelievable comments from you just now. One is that you clearly stated that food banks were being organized for political reasons, Mr. Minister, which is an appalling comment, and I ask you retract it.

Surely, Mr. Minister, you will acknowledge that food banks are being organized because there is a need for the food banks. And that is being demonstrated by the volume of business they're doing — 36,000 people in the province in 1987 having to, at some point in the year, depend on a food bank in their locality for food assistance, Mr. Minister.

That is an appalling comment, and for you to suggest for a moment that these food banks are being organized for political reasons by the NDP, is sheer nonsense, Mr. Minister, and I ask you to retract it.

It's also nonsense for you to suggest that we on this side of the House think that there's anything demeaning about cleaning up the river bank in Saskatoon or cleaning up a park. We've never suggested that for a moment. That's a very useful public service. What is demeaning, Mr. Minister, is that your government is only prepared to pay the people who do it \$360 a month with a take-home pay of \$316 — that's what's demeaning. I just want to make those concerns that we have perfectly clear.

Now, Mr. Minister, I just want to close on this issue of the food bank, since it's obvious that you're not prepared to institute a school lunch program, by asking you if you will at least undertake, in concert with the food banks in the province and the friendship inns in the province and the crisis centres in the province and the church community in the province, a comprehensive investigation of how this serious problem of child poverty and child hunger can be addressed.

We're in urgent need, Mr. Minister, of having you bring together community leaders in the field of social services

to think in a serious manner on how urgent action might be taken to resolve this problem of child hunger. So if you're not prepared to go with the school lunch program, will you at least give this House a commitment that you will immediately convene a group of leaders in the community to see what kind of action the government could . . . to advise the government on what kind of action could be taken in an urgent manner to resolve this very serious problem of child hunger in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I believe we're making progress. I believe the NDP now agree that we should have people working, cleaning up parks, and that is good. We will clean up more parks; we will try to clean up all the parks and I'm please that the member for Saskatoon now appreciates the clean-up of his park.

With respect to the wages being paid, Mr. Chairman — and I'm trying to speak while the members opposite make snide comments and remarks on the other side. It's a bit distracting, but I will not be discouraged — what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is that the member opposite is now complaining that some of the jobs that we have created under welfare reform are part-time jobs. And I indicated yesterday that between 350 and 400 were part-time jobs, but over the last three years, between us and the federal government on these type of projects, we have created over 10,000 jobs. And so 350 out of 10,000 is not a bad percentage on a ratio of full time to part time.

Let me also point out to the member opposite that in Saskatchewan we always try to ensure that people working will make more than on welfare. That is a key objective policy of this government, that you're always better off financially if you can work.

Now we'll try to continue reviewing the programs with respect to the handicapped so that we can increase income to the handicapped. And the members opposite may not know that at 9:30 this morning there was a news conference, and I should tell them about this because they would be glad to hear this. There was a news conference at 9:30 this morning whereby the Minister of Environment announced that Saskatchewan would be going to aluminum beverage cans in this province, effective May 17.

At the same time, before the television cameras at the news conference, there was a signing of a contract with the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres to give them the full provincial contract for the recycling of aluminum cans. They anticipate that they will be able to employ 150 handicapped people in Saskatchewan in full-employment type jobs. They will try to pay more than minimum wage for these jobs. They have given me a commitment that they will try to pay more than minimum wage wherever possible, and I think in most cases they will be able to be above that level.

There will be approximately 150 handicapped people working in Saskatchewan. We are creating another 150 jobs with our policies here of allowing aluminum cans and recycling rather than the policies of the NDP of having glass thrown out onto highways. Aluminum cans do not break and do not cause damage to property and to people, and little children don't step on glass when you

have aluminum cans.

And so the NDP, with their policy of “glass only” in Saskatchewan and no recycling, did not create those 150 jobs that will be created for the handicapped.

I notice they are stone-silent right now, Mr. Chairman. I expect that they agree this is the right thing to do. At least they are not jeering as they do from time to time, but they are stone-silent today, and they are accepting that this government has done a historic act in assisting the handicapped in employment.

(1200)

The president of SARC (Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres) today indicated at the news conference that, to his knowledge, this is the first of its kind in North America where the handicapped will have the provincial contract for the recycling of aluminum cans. There will be an environmental charge that will be used to pay for the labour provided by the handicapped.

They will be setting up a regular business, and the members opposite say, oh, those Conservatives, their friends are big business. Well I am proud to say today, Mr. Chairman, to everyone present, that yes, we have helped our friends in this business. We have given a monopoly to our friends in this business. I do not apologize for that. We have helped our friends, and in this case our friends are the handicapped, who will have a business of their own, and could have had it years ago but the NDP did not have the foresight to allow the handicapped to get into business, to become self-sufficient, because they insisted on having them dependent on the NDP and their big-government mentality.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — So, Mr. Chairman, I wanted to point that out to the members opposite, because I told them yesterday they should be patient and they will see the largest employment project for handicapped in the history of Saskatchewan — real employment, real work.

And the members opposite — yes, they are stone-silent. I challenge them to stand up and say: yes, this is the right thing to do; we would have done it if we would've been government. But I challenge them to explain why they didn't. I challenge them to explain why they didn't do it.

With respect to consulting with people on the question of the child-hunger situation, as the members opposite describe it in the inner city of Regina, I have met with the school boards here. My department officials are trying to get . . . put together a pilot project to determine what the extent of the problem is and look at solutions. And no, one of the solutions will not be a free universal lunch program for every student in Saskatchewan. We will help those people who are in need and we will look at a pilot project to do that. We are receiving good co-operation from the school boards, and I expect that if the co-operation continues, we'll be able to do something for fall with respect to a pilot project.

That is a new idea. The NDP's idea of a free universal

lunch program is a part of their time-warp that comes from Britain. It's the Labour government there put in a free universal food program in schools in 1944 or 1945 when they were elected. And then they continued their policies of dependency until people started joking that there was a British disease. There was something wrong with Britain, the whole country. The British disease was dependence on socialism. And it started with the policies that are 40 or 50 years old.

We have no ideological block in allowing the handicapped to become entrepreneurs and running their own business, and that is what we have done today. And we have no ideological block with helping only those children who need food assistance.

The NDP talk about free universal everything, and we say we will help those people who are in need. And we have consulted with the school boards, we have pilot projects that are being planned, and we will solve the problem.

In addition, where the problem . . . the problem in society today, the greatest problem we face are social problems — the problems of inter-family relationships, family breakdown, lack of parenting skills. This department has increased the budget for family services by two and a half million dollars this year to thirty-four and a half million dollars, and we are hiring an additional six people to help with families. We have put parent aides into families to help them learn how to be parents.

The members opposite have a simple solution: wither give away free food or give more money. We have to get to the root of the problem or society's problems will never be solved.

And I would encourage the members opposite to look beyond the immediate political expediency and the immediate political solution, and look into the future and find a way of making sure that we have a caring and prosperous society 15 years from now, rather than simply saying, pour money on the problem now.

I had an article here which I . . . I had an article here that comes from Vancouver. It's in *The Toronto Star*, but in Vancouver, Conrad Black, an entrepreneur whose name I know causes the NDP's adrenaline to go up considerably because he has become successful and they would want to pull a man like him down, but he is also entitled to his opinions. And I don't know if the headline in that paper is totally accurate or reflects what he said, but the headline says: “Welfare system a debt time bomb, tycoon says.” And it says:

Canadians are heading for a show-down with their economy as they try to pay for one of the most expensive social services systems in the world, business man Conrad Black says. It is one of the most comprehensive welfare systems in the world and it has created a debt bomb that will almost certainly detonate during the next full parliamentary term.

And he's saying that we have to generate more money to pay for our social programs. The members opposite are against business; they're against international trade; in

some cases they're against work. They're in favour of socialism, inefficiency, all the kind of things that will not generate the money we need to pay for our social programs in the future. We're not paying for them now.

Every province has a deficit; the federal government has a deficit. We are not paying for our social programs now. And how are we going to generate the money to pay for them in the future when we have people like the NDP that have vision that goes about that far?

Statesmen, governments have to have leadership that plans for five years from now and 10 years from now and 20 years from now. And whether those plans are politically popular or not, a responsible government plans for the future and not for popularity.

This government — and the members opposite jump up and down and cheer — is not popular. This government is doing what's right for the future of Saskatchewan. We are a government for the long run because we will be here in the long run, and we are planning for the future, not for short-term popularity. The members opposite, certainly if they do not change their ways, will never be wise enough or fit enough to govern this province.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Chairman, for the minister, the need for meeting the child hunger crisis in this province is immediate. The need to respond is now, and not just through some long-term plan. And I think that's self-evident, frankly, Mr. Chairman, to everyone but members opposite.

I want to move to the subject of the Legal Aid Commission, Mr. Minister, which is under your department. And I want to begin, if I may, by presenting a petition that has been signed by some 400 residents of the province of Saskatchewan, 123, Mr. Minister, of whom are lawyers.

And I think I'll read the petition precisely in terms of the wording that prefaces the signatures. It's addressed to the Government of Saskatchewan and it's regarding the deterrent fees that have been imposed by the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission.

We the undersigned are adamantly opposed to the implementation of the plan requiring payment of a fee as a pre-condition to the provision of services to legal aid applicants. We feel this proposal will place an unfair burden on those who can least afford to pay.

We are further opposed to any further funding cuts to the legal aid system in this province. We urge the Government of Saskatchewan to reconsider the funding decisions for legal aid with a view towards increasing future budgets.

Now, Mr. Minister, that petition is signed by 486 people — 123 lawyers or professors of law or scholars of law have signed this petition, and 363 other citizens of assorted occupations. And I would like to at this point, if I could, to table that petition with the Clerk of the Assembly.

And, Mr. Minister, my first question to you in the context of that petition is: are you at long last prepared to reconsider your decision, your cabinet's decision to impose user fees to the legal aid system in Saskatchewan? Are you prepared, Mr. Minister, at this point, to drop the deterrent fee that your government is charging the working poor of this province when they need legal assistance?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, legal aid is adequately serving the needs in Saskatchewan. Only the NDP believe that it is not. Yes, they may have a few lawyers who would want us to spend more money on legal aid, on the legal aid industry. And lawyers certainly are not totally objective when it comes to saying spend more money on legal aid, because the money is primarily spent on lawyers.

I am a lawyer. I understand the legal aid system; I've understood it for years and years. And I can understand also that the most the NDP ever spent on legal aid from the graph that I have before me is approximately . . . they were usually running under \$4 million a year. and in their last year of government they got over that to 4.5 million. And as soon as the Conservative government took over, legal aid costs went up to approximately 6 million per year. we've held them at that level, and they went up year after year until last year we said, these costs have got to be brought in line.

Here is how the expenditure goes for legal aid. The provincial government and the federal government — and it's through out expropriation in this budget we discuss — forecast an expenditure of \$5.77 million. The costs awarded are \$13,000 that they collect in costs. Their contributions are \$152,000. This is the \$152,000 that the member opposite is saying that the people should not contribute, but the taxpayers should throw in another \$152,000.

They have contracts with Health for \$100,000, and other income of interest, sales of assets, of \$34,000, for a total of \$6,070,900.

I've indicated earlier that the expenditure for legal aid on average under the NDP was not even \$400,000. On average, ours is in the range of six . . . or was not even \$4 million; on average, our expenditure is \$6 million. And the NDP have their classic answer: it's not enough, it's not enough, it's not enough. They're like a stuck record in a time warp. It's not enough, it's not enough. That's all you every hear from them.

In addition, I have asked the law foundation to make a contribution. The lawyers themselves, through the law foundation, won't contribute anything towards legal aid. We asked for \$100,000 or some indication that the law foundation should also be used for legal aid, and they would not budge on that. Other provinces have law foundations contributing towards legal aid.

I'm not asking for a lot of money, but I'm asking for a little contribution from those . . . If you have 123 lawyers who say the government should throw in more money, I'm asking the lawyers to take that interest accrued on trust accounts and take a little bit of that interest and spend it

on legal aid. They don't believe the need is there; they say the taxpayer should throw it all in. I'm prepared to look at some sharing here.

And so my position is clear, as a lawyer. And yes, I do not contribute to that law foundation money because I don't actively practise law any more. But as a lawyer who is still licensed to practise, I say that lawyers have a responsibility through the law foundation to make a modest contribution towards legal aid. The taxpayers are throwing in \$5.7 million; lawyers also do have some charitable obligation to assist others.

(1215)

And so the member opposite says, oh, the taxpayer should throw in more money. I'm saying that we are running it efficiently, the service provided is adequate, and that the law foundation should co-operate in a modest sum. And I'm not asking for a lot of money, but at least some indication that they care about legal aid.

Now the member opposite will have some kind of observations about where we should go get out money, but I'm saying to you that the amount of money coming into this province is finite, and that the only way more money can come into this province is if we increase production in this province, increase diversification, and increase our trade with the rest of the world where the money is. so the member opposite should take all of those things into account. I say, legal aid is adequate.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Chairman, a new question to the minister, Mr. Minister, we on this side of the House certainly share your view that legal aid at this point is run in a highly efficient manner, but we don't accept for a moment your suggestion that the current services are adequate or that the imposition of a user fee to the working poor of this province is acceptable, Mr. Minister.

The point that I'd particularly like to draw to your attention is that you condemn the New Democrats on this side of the House for the past services that we were offering under legal aid. I suggest, Mr. Minister, that your comments are misguided.

If you look at legal aid services which, I might add, were instituted by the former NDP government, you will see that legal aid in Saskatchewan under the NDP used to cover all legal services except for fee-generating ones, Mr. Minister, and that it was only when your government came to office that we saw a reduction in 1984 of legal aid services, effectively eliminating most areas of civil law except for family matters. And the minister is well aware of that change that his government instituted. So for you to suggest, Mr. Minister, that somehow services were inadequate under the NDP and then suddenly adequate under your government is misleading, to say the least.

But the point that I'd particularly like to get at is the evaluation report that was recently done jointly by the federal Department of Justice and the province of Saskatchewan, and that was submitted to your government earlier this year.

Mr. Minister, one of the concerns expressed in that joint

evaluation by the federal Department of Justice and the province of Saskatchewan was that the guide-lines that you were using for eligibility for legal aid services are very unfair to the working poor; that your family income plan guide-lines, because social assistance rates and the family income benefits have not gone up since you came into government, that in effect what has happened is that the law income cut-off that Statistics Canada uses is now a much higher figure than the family income plan guide-lines. In other words, Mr. Minister, a lot of people that the Government of Canada and Statistics Canada considers to be working poor are not people that you consider to be working poor in your government.

In other words, the federal Department of Justice is saying to you, Mr. Minister, that it's time that you expanded the income levels that are eligible for legal aid. And I'm asking you, Mr. Minister, whether you're prepared to act on the recommendation of that evaluation report and to use the low income cut-off figures that Statistics Canada uses as the basis for legal and eligibility.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, people should know that anyone receiving social assistance in Saskatchewan automatically qualifies for legal aid. Anyone who is a treaty Indian in Saskatchewan automatically qualifies for legal aid. We will review the rates from time to time, and we are examining that report to see how it fits into the general theory of government.

But again the member opposite has said that the social assistance rates have not gone up, and we just raised them last January — \$13 per child, \$17 per adult. How can he stand here and say the rates have not gone up? They do this over and over again, Mr. Chairman, right in the face of all of us. the cheques have gone out, the regulations have been passed, the newspapers reported the increase, and the member opposite stands here in front of us and tries to have us believe that the rates have not gone up.

How can they keep doing this? Do they no understand what is true or what is false, or don't they know the difference? There has to be something wrong with their philosophy or their education or their upbringing, because they cannot seem to tell the difference between what is true and what isn't true.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'm not going to bit the minister's bait here on whether or not the welfare rates have gone up again. We've indicated yesterday, Mr. Minister, that the cuts to the travel allowance, the laundry allowance, and the utility allowance more than offset any increases that you've made. But it's obvious, Mr. Minister, that you're not prepared to respond directly to the question.

I want to ask you a new question and that is that the evaluation report that you receive from the Department of Justice and the province of Saskatchewan, that joint evaluation also recommended that service in legal aid should be expanded to include, at least, matrimonial property on a contribution basis, administrative tribunals, wills and estates, landlord-tenant concerns and poverty-law advocacy, and in some cases expanded service on summary conviction matters where the budget permits.

Now, Mr. Minister, that report pointed out to you and your department officials that the need for the expansion of these legal aid services is reaffirmed by the fact that approximately half the defendants and litigants who appear in court do so unrepresented, presumably, Mr. Minister, because they're unable to afford such representation.

And my question to you is: will you, Mr. Minister, at least if you're not prepared to drop the deterrent fees, at least expand legal aid services in the civil area to cover the fields that I've just mentioned so that working poor people don't have to go to the courts unrepresented because they can't afford to hire a lawyer.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, it does not surprise me that half the people in court are represented. I saw that myself when I used to go to court. It's also a known fact that 90 per cent of people who go to court are convicted or pleas guilty initially, and it seems to me that more than half the people pleas guilty. And if someone knows they are guilty and say, I'm guilty, I'm ready to accept my punishment or rehabilitation . . . that we should spend more money to insist that they have a lawyer to go with them when they know that they are guilty and admit it.

So there again the member opposite is throwing about statistics that are not consistent to the facts out there. And that even, as far as I recall, even the statistics in Canada on contested trials have a conviction ratio of between 85 and 90 per cent. So ordinarily the police do not charge people who haven't committed some offence. Yes, in some cases people are not guilty of what they have been charged with, and those people have lawyers if the need them. And those people who are guilty and need legal advice receive it. But those people who do not ask for legal advice, certainly I should not impose it upon them, nor should I require the taxpayers to insist that they spend their tax money on people who haven't asked for any legal advice.

So let's be reasonable about this. We are providing adequate legal services to those people who need the services. again the members opposite are advocating free universal legal assistance to everyone, even if they don't ask for it. That's going even further than what they usually advocate. They're advocating free universal legal aid, even to people who don't ask for legal aid. You know, they go on and on this way. Certainly even the NDP must have a limit to what they ask for.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, once again you're trying to misconstrue the arguments that are being put forward on this side of the House. But I want to ask you another question about this evaluation report which, I think, clearly demonstrates the fact that while the staff in the legal aid system are doing an outstanding job, that the services that are able to be offered to clients are felt by staff and non-staff to be insufficient, in the sense that the range of services is too narrow.

One of the things, Mr. Minister, that this joint report by the province of Saskatchewan and the federal Department of Justice recommends is that consideration be given to

increasing legal aid funding in light of the present heavy case-load and restricted range of services. as you will be well aware, that's what the report recommends. The report points out that Saskatchewan's average case costs are the second lowest among non-Atlantic provinces. In other words, west of the Atlantic provinces we have the second lowest case costs in Canada. This is an indication of the very heavy case-load that legal aid staff are carrying.

The report notes that in 1985 the average case-load was 306 cases per lawyer. Obviously, Mr. Minister, that heavy case-load limits the ability of legal aid staff to provide the very best representation they would like to on behalf of clients.

And my question to you, Mr. Minister, is: are you prepared to accept the recommendation in the report that funding for legal aid services be expanded and improved?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, now the member opposite agrees that we have a good legal aid system, and I believe that if we have a good system and it's working we shouldn't start fiddling with it.

And the NDP . . . And he says also that the average case-load is 306. I want to point out to the member opposite that when I was in private practice my case-load was in excess of 306, and that almost every lawyer in private practice that I know has a case-load in excess of 306. Well, there's one I know that doesn't, but he's not practising law, he's in the legislature right now and he doesn't believe that . . . (inaudible interjection). . . No, I can't mention the name of the member. What I'm saying is that most lawyers in Saskatchewan have a case-load in excess of 306, so there's nothing unusual about that case-load.

You refer to the report. I told you we were analysing the report. We have detected some errors in the calculations in that report; we do not accept their calculations with respect to the FIP breaks in the family income plan. We cannot accept every report that's written. We have to analyse it and examine it. It is only a report. They do not have a mandate to govern or make government policy; they were appointed to make recommendations.

The people who write reports do not have to find the money to pay for their recommendations and so you have to take this all into account. The NDP are consistent here, they ask for more, more, more, more, always more. But their records is that they only spent 4.5 million; we're spending 6 million; that's more that keeping up with inflation, at least, the very least keeping up with inflation. And so they ask for more, more, more and I say that there is a limit to everything, and we have to use money for health care and education and raising social services rates, and that there's not always more for every pet project of the NDP.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, I have one final question I want to ask you about the legal aid budget, and that relates to the question of privatization of services. Can you inform the Assembly whether you are planning to expand the role of the private bar in service delivery? And, Mr. Minister, if you are, could you be specific about

what areas of legal aid service you are planning to expand the services of the private bar in? How far do your privatization plans go, Mr. Minister? Can you elaborate on that, please?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I've had discussions with the law society about expanding the role of the private bar with respect to criminal law and criminal law defences.

This would, if my recommendations were accepted, this would allow the individual citizen greater choice in their choice of lawyer and who they want to represent them. I might say at this stage, that the Law Society of Saskatchewan hasn't shown much interest in having the private bar do more criminal law and I expect they're divided on this topic, maybe even on political lines. But if the law society and the lawyers in general aren't interested, I'm certainly not going to impose upon them the participation of the private bar.

(1230)

But I do believe that the grass roots, you might say, of the law community, that most of their private practising lawyers out there would be interested in participating in private defences with respect to legal aid and that they would be prepared to accept rates considerably lower than their normal rates in order to assist in providing this service to people. so it will take the matter up again with the law society and see if they are actually interested or not interested.

This is an opportunity for the law society and the lawyers of Saskatchewan to fully participate in the criminal law field, which is now primarily dominated by legal and clinics. And there are views that we are restricting lawyers to certain areas of practice and are not gaining a broad enough experience, that we are not training young criminal lawyers in the private sector. And so I throw this out as a challenge to the law society and the lawyers of Saskatchewan, that if they are interested in participation in legal aid at the criminal law level, that they should communicate that to me and we will try to work out a system.

But I do not operate on ideology. If they are not interested, then fine. I'm satisfied with the existing system, but I think people could be given more choice, and I'm prepared to look at that possibility.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, I should say that we urge you to use extreme caution in terms of your privatization efforts in this area, which we would not view with a great deal of support.

I want to ask you finally in this area, with respect to privatization of services, whether on the civil side your government is also actively looking at significantly explaining the role of the private bar and reducing the role of legal aid staff? Are you considering that, Mr. Minister, and could you answer that question?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, if we allowed the private bar to provide legal aid services, there would be no directive on the reduction of staff. We would have

people having a choice as to who they want to represent them, and legal aid clinics would be in a competitive situation with a private bar. And those people that provide the best service would get the most business.

So legal aid does not have to be threatened, but they would certainly have to measure up to the standards provided by the private bar. I think that legal aid recipients are entitled to a choice, and I think they are entitled to have the standards that are common in the private bar.

So there are various possibilities here. I know the members opposite don't like the word "competition"; I know they don't like the word "choice." They want people to be required to deal with a government-run clinic. But I have had complaints over the years from the clientele of legal aid that they would like to have a better choice of their lawyer, and I'm prepared to accommodate them if at all possible.

Mr. Shillington: — I'm interested in the minister's comments. Does the minister have any evidence that the quality of work provided by the Legal Aid Commission is not on a par with that provided by the private bar?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I did not say that the quality of the work is not on a par with the private bar, and therefore I do not have any evidence that it is not. What I said is that the Legal Aid Commission would have to compete, or the legal aid lawyers would have to compete with the private bar lawyers and the public would decide as to the quality of the service that's being provided and make their choice.

And I don't suppose the member opposite has any objection to clients entitled to legal aid having a choice as to whether they would want a legal aid lawyer or a private lawyer, assuming that the cost to the taxpayer is the same. And so if they're opposed to that kind of a choice, I would ask them to say so.

But no, I did not say that the service being provided is not equal to what the private bar can provide now. I'm saying they should be entitled to a choice.

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the minister a few questions now on the matter of day care so that your officials can be appropriately preparing, Mr. Minister.

My concern, Mr. Minister, is with respect to your proposed new day-care legislation. As demand for day care grows in Saskatchewan, the demand is growing at a much faster rate than the number of licensed day-care spaces in the province, and so we're witnessing a mushrooming of unlicensed day-care centres, particularly in the urban areas. These unlicensed centres have no obligations to meet even minimum standards, and often books are not open. There are certainly no inspections and there are no subsidies, of course, to parents.

Now, Mr. Minister, we on this side of the House are of the view that your government's central thrust in the area of child care should be on concentrating on improving and

expanding quality, affordable day care that is offered through licensed centres that are non-profit and parent-controlled.

My question to you, Mr. Minister, is: when you do introduce your new day-care Act, can you ensure us that the licensing of spaces will be limited to non-profit groups and to parent-controlled groups over and above the current family day-care homes?

In other words, can you assure us that the day-care centres will be limited to parent-controlled centres and to non-profit centres? Because it is our view, Mr. Minister, that only the parent-controlled, non-profit model will ensure that children's needs will be put first rather than the needs of a private operator running a centre for profit.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, no, I cannot give him that assurance.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, is it your plan, then, to open the door in your new legislation to profit day care? Can you answer that question, please?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I don't know what a profit day care is. We're looking at a new day-care Act that will allow people that qualify to run a day care and meet the requirements to run a day care. And whether the . . . I could probably require that they not make a profit. But it's hard to tell whether someone is making wages or where they are making a profit. And so I can give them no assurance that people will be paid only in wages and not in profits.

Day-care centres will be licensed. They will have to meet the provincial standards as now, and they will have to meet the future standards. And in addition, there will be more of them; there will be more day-care spaces. In addition, parents will have a choice as to which day care they want to send them to. There's no choice now because there aren't enough spaces to make a choice. You're lucky if you can get in, and that's because we have still a continuation of the NDP's system of restricting the number of day-care spaces.

So I give them no assurance that there won't be changes when we bring in a day-care Act.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, I want to ask you specifically in this budget: where you've only allocated some additional \$600,000 to the creation of new spaces this year, these are — as my colleague, the member for Saskatoon Nutana, pointed out earlier — these are simply spaces that were committed in the previous fiscal year and were not delivered in that year and now are being, I understand, put into effect in the year 1988-89 fiscal budget.

But, Mr. Minister, my question to you is why you've not responded to the federal government initiative to create many new spaces? In effect, you're only putting in \$300,000 of additional moneys for the creation of new spaces in this province when we have a situation in Saskatchewan where only 11 per cent of children who need child care are in licensed spaces.

So my question to you, Mr. Minister, is why you haven't responded to the federal initiative to create new spaces in this budget? All we see is an additional \$300,000 of provincial money, and that is even before inflation is taken into account. Because when inflation is taken into account, it in fact reduces the increase even further.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I answered most of these questions a day or two ago. Since we've become government, we have increased the number of day-care spaces by 2,086, which is a 58 per cent increase in the number of spaces. In addition, we have increased the budgetary expenditure on day care by 113 per cent since we became government. I would ask the member opposite to acknowledge that 113 per cent is increasing day-care spaces a lot faster than inflation and certainly a lot faster than the budgetary income of this government.

So we, in conjunction with the federal government, will continue to make improvements in day care. With respect to the federal government, they have raised the amount you can deduct from your income tax from 2,000 per child to 4,000 per child. I was in error the other day. I said there was an \$8,000 family limit. There is no family limit; \$4,000 per child is the limit.

We will make more spaces available as a result of the program that the federal government has brought in. I just announced last week in your city, in the city of Saskatoon, 30 new spaces in a Lutheran housing project, and you acknowledge that. I am pleased you acknowledged that. I said to your colleague, I will be announcing many more spaces in both urban and rural Saskatchewan, and so you will see in the next while many more spaces being announced.

And I answered the other day, that last year's announcements of openings were delayed due to figuring out what the federal government is doing and to putting that together into our day-care policy. I'll be bringing in a day-care Act and we'll be announcing more spaces. And I think you will see that the improvement we have had over the last five or six years, of an extra 2,086 or 58 per cent more spaces is a credible record. The increase in the budget of 113 per cent is a credible record. I suggest to you that that is fair and reasonable.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, I just have four or five other questions before we finish up your budget estimates, and I'll try to keep my questions brief, and perhaps we can try to be finished around 1 o'clock with the adjournment of the Assembly at that time.

I want to ask you a brief question with respect to staffing in the day-care division. I noticed that there is again this year two more staff positions that have been deleted in the day-care branch. I wonder if you can tell me what the responsibilities of those staff are. Are we looking at the deletion of people who have responsibility from monitoring the day-care centres and doing developmental work with the parent boards in terms of trying to improve services that can be offered by day-care centres?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, with respect to staff, we haven't decreased the number of staff — some people

are doing different jobs right now — but we have four people in Regina, two in Saskatoon, one in Prince Albert, one in La Ronge that are still out consulting and providing services to the people in the field.

In addition, I have in my budget this year, over last year's actual expenditure, 7.9 per cent, and I intend to spend that before the year is out in additional day-care spaces.

(1245)

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, your budget shows clearly, reduction of two staff positions. If my memory serves me correctly, from 28 and a half to 26 and a half. Can you confirm that?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — My officials advise that these are two typists who have moved to a different subvote. They are still typing day-care work, sort of thing. It's more of a sharing of staff there. They're still doing the day-care work, but they're under a different vote.

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for clarifying that. I have a question with respect to the appeal mechanism that your department offers social assistance recipients which I think, Mr. Minister, that the appeal procedure is in real need of amendment.

As you may know, there's no such thing as a precedent in social service appeal board proceedings. A recipient can go before the appeal committee to ask for a resumption of social assistance payments based on a certain set of circumstances and win that appeal, and then a week later an identical set of circumstances can be brought to the appeal board and the ruling can go in favour of the department.

Mr. Minister, my question is: don't you think there's something wrong with that kind of system, and would you not look at introducing a system that reflected some kind of consistency with precedent setting cases that apply to other similar cases? I think, Mr. Minister, that that would have some real merit.

I also want to suggest to you that I note your appeal boards and appeal committees are made up primarily of lay people, and we think it's a good idea to have lay people on the appeal committees, but we'd also urge you to look at having some people with social services experience, a social work background, on those appeal committees. The regulations and the policy manual have become very complex, and I think there'd be some real merit to having some professionals on those appeal committees as well as lay people, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, the process on appeals at social services has not changed during the course of our government. I doubt if it's changed very much since 1966 when the Canada assistance plan was brought in.

As a matter of fact the process is that you appeal locally, and if you're not satisfied you can appeal to the provincial appeal board. It is almost like going to a Court of Queen's Bench, and if you're not satisfied you can appeal to the Court of Appeal in Regina.

And I might say that the equivalent of the Chief Justice of that provincial appeal is Margaret Cuddington, who has service in that position since 1966. She is now asking to retire, and she's asking to retire because she's served for 22 years. And over 22 years she has seen just about everything and has learned an awful lot about the system and the nature of the appeals, to the extent that over the time I've been minister she's been giving me advice on changes that could be made, or procedures or policies that could be changed, and I've followed up on that advice on many occasions.

So I don't believe that we need any experts when we have a person in charge there who has been there for 22 years, under a Liberal government, an NDP government, and a Conservative government. She's now asking for retirement from that position, has agreed to stay on at my request, and has stayed on for an additional six months. And she's been doing an excellent job.

In addition, this is not like courts. You can reapply for welfare and you can get a new appeal. So it's more like the America system of law where you can have several appeals on one case. In a court system you only get one appeal. Here, yes, you get one appeal and a review of your appeal by the provincial body, but you could reapply and then you can appeal all over again, and this goes on and on that way.

In addition, people do appeal and they do make complaints to the Ombudsman, and so they have another remedy there. And the Ombudsman does contact our office and intervene on their behalf where their office feels that we have been unreasonable in the application of the policies, and we try to adjust things.

And I can tell you that I have had social services recipients write to me personally and say that they felt they weren't being treated fairly. And I've intervened with my department in many cases where these people have written in. And where I felt maybe that we were being a little too strict, I've asked the department to reconsider. And in some of those cases, those people have had fair consideration from me personally as the minister.

So I know that you're going to say political interference. No, I don't know what politics these people have. If somebody writes me a letter at Social Services, I read it. If I'm concerned about what they are saying, if I think that they have a legitimate complaint, I ask my department to review it. So it's not always necessary to appeal. In some cases we review just on the basis of internal situations and even information that comes to my office.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, I just have three remaining questions. One is with respect to the matter of social assistance recipients who are prescribed medications by their doctor and yet the Department of Social Services is not covering those medications. I've had several instances brought to my attention where a social assistance recipient will require five, six, seven medications and yet the department may only fund three or four of them, when these medications have been prescribed by their MD.

My question, Mr. Minister, simply is: why is the department not covering these medications and will you change your policy so that medications that are being prescribed by a family doctor to that family, will be paid for by the Department of Social Services either through your plan I, under which people pay \$2 a prescription fee, or your plan II, under which no payment is made by the recipient.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I thank the member opposite for pointing out that we have special drug considerations for people on social services. And yes, he is correct that everyone who's on social services pays a prescription fee of \$2 for their drugs. And if their doctor feels that that \$2 is a hardship because of maybe the repetitive nature of the prescription, than their doctor can contact us or make a recommendation, and then we can, in step two, waive even the payment of the \$2, and they pay absolutely nothing for their drugs.

And that's contrary to what the members opposite say about how the drug plan's affecting the poor or the changes in the drug plan. Here we have for those people who are on welfare, a \$2 drug charge, and zero if their doctor feels that they have a very repetitive prescription and that they would have to pay the \$2 too often.

So I want to point out, and I know the member acknowledges that that has not changed and that is a fair system of doing it. So if even under this system people are still having special problems, I have the power, as the minister, to authorize special needs. And if there are an isolated case here or there where there's a special need that even this system doesn't cover, I'm prepared to examine them on a case by case basis.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, the point here is that there are more and more medications by your department that people are coming to us and saying, despite the fact that they're on social assistance, they won't . . . they can't get covered by the Department of Social Services even when their doctor recommends it, the point being, Mr. Minister, that some of these people have drug bills of 30 or 40 or \$50 a month that they simply have a great deal of difficulty paying out of your skimpy social assistance rates. So I'd be grateful if you would look at that.

I have two other issues I want to briefly raise with you. One is a real concern I have, Mr. Minister, about the very inadequate resources that are available to 16- and 18-year-olds in this province. Where there is a crisis in the family, the young person, in many cases, may have to leave the family. If you're a ward of the minister, they're in a . . . they find themselves in a situation where, as I understand it now, your department will only cover their educational costs, Mr. Minister, if they sign an agreement with you prior to their 16th birthday. My understanding that after their 16th birthday it's not possible for them to get their educational costs covered if they sign an agreement with you after their 16th birthday.

And this is just one example, Mr. Minister, of the hardship that 16- to 18-year-olds who are no longer living at home and have become a ward under the state face, Mr. Minister, and I am wondering if you would look at changing that policy.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I have a double problem here and it's hard to resolve this. It's almost like King Solomon's problem in that I have people coming to me saying, you can't allow people to run away from home and have them go on welfare simply because they can't get along with their parents; they're not listening to their parents. We've tried to stop that kind of a situation. And the parents phone us and say, why are you supporting my child? I will support your child; send him or her home; there's a home for them.

On the other hand, we have some instances where these — and these aren't children; these are adolescents — where these adolescents can't live at home. So I'll give you the policy as it exists: the department does not provide assistance to 16- and 17-year-old children unless there's evidence of serious family problems and/or they have been rejected by their family.

When a youth applies for social assistance eligibility, the assessment is as follows: number one, the question is, is the youth attending school, living with parents, or other arrangements made by parents? The policy is, we consider the youth's family as dependent and refuse assistance if that person is living in a situation where the parents agree to it or have made that arrangement and the parents can afford to support that child. And these are adolescents, I might say.

Secondly, where the youth is not attending school but living with the parents, we refer to family services if there are serious family or protection concerns. We consider the youth a dependant and refuse assistance where that youth is living with the family and there is no danger to the youth in staying there.

Where the youth leaves the family and it would not be in the interest of that youth to go back to that family, we support that youth. And we do assist them with school where they have a reason for not living with their family. If they simply don't want to live with their family, then we do not support them, they have to support themselves.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, I want to say, in conclusion on this matter, that there is just a chronic shortage of community resources for young people in the 16- to 18-year age group, and that is of great concern to members on this side of the House.

It seems that if there . . . that those under 16 are able to at least access some resources through your department who will pay for placement in group homes and provide assistance with other payment through other community resources that exist. But for those over 16 there's a real chronic shortage of resources in this province, almost bordering, I would say, on crisis proportions, Mr. Minister. I hope that your department will act in the next year to resolve that very serious situation.

And I want to ask you, in concluding, as I see that our time is basically up, if you can give me your assurance that the written questions that I have sent over to you will be answered within the next week to 10 days. Could I have that assurance that all the written questions that I have submitted to you will receive a prompt answer from your

department?

The committee reported progress.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, yesterday at 4:07 the member opposite gave me a list of 21 questions he wanted answered. He has added to that list a twenty-second question. We will try to answer those questions wherever possible and wherever appropriate.

The Assembly adjourned at 1:04 p.m.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 19 inclusive agreed to.

Mr. Prebble: — I'd just like to thank the officials who've been here this morning for their co-operation and assistance. We on this side of the House, obviously, strongly disagree with many of the directions that are being taken in the Department of Social Services, but we do appreciate the co-operation and assistance of the officials, both yesterday and today. And we want to express our thanks to them and wish them a fine weekend.

Vote 36 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, in conclusion I would also like to thank, not only the officials of my department, but all of the approximately 2,000 employees in this department for the co-operation they have given us in the past year while they have gone through many changes, and while we have reorganized the department in many ways.

And the management team you see here is one that I am truly proud of and that this government is truly proud of. They've distinguished themselves in paying respect and heed to the budget. They have tried to bring the department in within the budget. They have done that for the first time in many, many years, so that now a budget is a budget of the Department of Social Services, even though we do not have control over the expenditures because a lot of them are tied to society.

These people have working long, long hours in trying to simplify a very complicated system. There are many changes. The staff has been very good. All of the 2,000 staff are trying to co-operate. These people are very conscientious, very concerned, very caring, and just an excellent team to work with. They have made my job so much easier over the past few months that I hope that they can repeat that performance in the coming year. and I thank them very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Supplementary Estimates (No. 2)
Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Social Services
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 36

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

Mr. Chairman: — I would also like to thank the minister and his officials.