

EVENING SITTING

Return No. 24

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I wonder, with leave of the Assembly, if we could go directly to orders for return (debatable).

Leave granted.

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Debatable)

Return No. 3

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I move that an order of the Assembly do issue a return for no. 3 showing.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, this is the only order for return that I intend to offer an amendment for tonight, but it simply . . . it changes the order to be consistent with the return ordered last time, no. 1. But no. 2, a disclosure of the type of work, may also jeopardize the government's position on a particular legal matter, Mr. Speaker.

So my motion will simply amend this return or this order by deleting all the words after "firm" in the last line. That will simply have the effect of "the purpose of the work performed," Mr. Speaker. I am told by legal people around the place that it would be improper to offer that kind of information in the circumstances, and so I move, seconded by the Minister of Health:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "firm" in the last line.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

Return No. 14

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, it is of concern to members on this side of the House and to, generally, people within the province the amount of money that this government is spending on advertising. Also, making reference back to the order that was implied by the organizer of the Tory PC convention, implying that kickbacks are in order when using advertising firms within the province, it becomes a significant question to know just where the money that's spent on advertising is going and for what it is being used.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return showing:

For the period September 15, 1978 to the date this return was ordered: (1) the amounts paid to the firm of Mercury Printers Limited by each department, agency or Crown corporation of the Government of Saskatchewan; (2) in each case, the nature of the work performed.

Mr. Speaker, I had indicated seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return no. 24 showing, seconded by the member from Elphinstone.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Education

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 5

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Chairman, the other day I asked the minister- in fact, it was two days ago, the second last day that we did estimates — for some information on officials in his department, and also the increases to his personal staff. I was wondering if the minister had that information for me now.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The official who would have the information the hon. member talked about is just on his way here. He's in Legislative Review Committee; so maybe we can proceed until he shows up.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Minister, does that include the information, both on your personal staff increases and also on the . . . (inaudible) . . . Okay, fine.

Mr. Minister, I want to begin this evening to ask you some questions on core curriculum and where we are at in core curriculum. I don't intend to spend any amount of time in detail as to what has transpired, but certainly there is some serious concern out there by the practitioners on just how ready you and your department and officials are in implementing core and what we can expect come December on several accounts.

First of all, are we going to implement core in the same degree throughout the province? Number two: what preparation is your department in making sure that there is sufficient in-service training? And what is going to be done in preparing the teachers from now until December in making sure that the core curriculum is implemented as it should be?

Would you tell me now to what extent are you ready. Do you have the staff? What about funds? What about in-service training? And what about the implementation of core throughout the province? How do you see it happening come September?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, and hon. member, if I could have a page take over this information.

Relative to what's happening this September, first — two things really. Number one is the common essential learnings will be introduced, and they'll be introduced

and uniformly applied across the province. Secondly, we will be moving to the 24-credit requirement from 21 starting with grade 10.

The requirement will be uniformly applied across the province, but how they must meet that, we're allowing for some flexibility during this initial phase so that we don't cause any hardship to any school boards or, more importantly, to any students.

And in so far as what particular measures we're putting in place, there's been a number of initiatives already, and I think most notably, but not particularly, of the common essentials learning conference a month or two ago, which I heard nothing but good reports on from those educators who attended it.

As well in this budget there are some new moneys, \$1 million to be exact, to provide for in-service training prior to the educators going back into the class-room this fall, and I can detail how that money will be spent if you so wish. But I've said now, really for some good long time, that in-service is important to any profession, or continuing education as some professions would call it, and it's going to be particularly important to teachers given the new core curriculum and the new directions. But really, if you think about it, for any job in the future, updating and retraining are going to be a fact of life, and certainly — although we haven't a special reason right now for educators — that's going to be the fact . . . or that's going to be the norm, as opposed to the exception, in the jobs of the future.

(1915)

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Minister, you haven't really told me very much about what is happening, or what is going to happen. Am I to gather from what you are saying that really we aren't ready for the fall. I mean, to increase from 21 to 24 takes no preparation. You issued the directive that from now on those who begin grade 10 will have 24 credits.

What I wanted from you is: are the curricula ready for the various subject areas? Have we had people in the class-room doing the actual testing of the curricula? Are you getting feedback from various people on what changes ought to be made to some of the curricula? I'm hearing a number of . . . I've talked to a number of people, and they're telling me they have some concerns about some of the curricula and they have to be revised.

Exactly what preparation have you done up until now? I mean you can't just go into the core curriculum and say, well okay, here are all the great things the core curriculum is going to do without making certain that teachers have the materials. Do they have the back-up material? Will they have the actual text? Will they have the copies of the actual curricula which they are expected to use? What have you got and what you can tell the teachers today, and those that are possibly watching tonight, that yes, I can assure you that by September you will have all these things in your hand and we are ready to go? Or are you telling them that basically what you are saying is, well, we'll go from 21 to 24 credits, and here and there we may have some experiments done it the

new curricula, but overall, no, we're not ready in September. Is that what I'm to gather from what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, I think the hon. member I doing a bit of grandstanding here in so far as what he pretends to know or pretends not to know.

As was pointed out to me when, about a year ago now, we announced what the new core curriculum would be, the message clearly from educators was that the implementation . . . define the core was one thing, and it was very, very important, that minimum body of knowledge which our children must learn. But what they impressed upon me was that the implementation of that core was as critical as the defining of core itself. What they said is that you know, you cannot define this new core curriculum and then drop it on the teaching profession overnight and expect them to be up and running. And I think the hon. member probably knows that, but I think he's maybe trying to play devil's advocate or something here tonight.

Being cognizant of that, and certainly my officials being very much aware of it, some time lines have been established, as you will know. As you will know, curriculum development doesn't occur overnight. You require writers; there's an advisory committee; there's an overall steering committee to help me and our department implement this. And the various required areas of study, for example, social studies and language arts are two that are most advanced, it would be written input from the advisory committee. Then it would even be piloted for probably a year, take that feedback which we've had an some of them that have been written already, so some fine tuning where necessary, and then it becomes an official curriculum, if you like. It's a dynamic process. The social studies and language arts are probably the farthest along; math and science less far.

And if I was to speculate a little bit, I would think that this entire process of directions and core curriculum probably will take five to 10 years. That's what I said some several months ago, that's what was said at the time it was announced, and it may well be that that is the reality. Time lines have been set. We are in a hurry, I suppose, to do it right, but to think that, for example, through 12 grades and seven required areas of study, that 84 new curricula would be developed for September 1 is . . . well I don't even think you were expecting that kind of thing.

We want to work with the profession; there's in-service being provided; there's been conferences. It's a very busy agenda, as you well know, and it'll be taken step by step in conjunction with educators and school boards so that indeed we don't have chaos out there with these changes because they are massive changes.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Minister, the accusations that were made — not by me — but by others in the profession, by the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) officials and by teachers and by trustees and others, that exactly what they predicted is happening. You know, when you fired all the people who were the centre core of your department and you fired them all, you had nobody left to do the writing for you. And then you had to run around

very quickly to try and hire some people that were competent in that particular area but who had no experience or knowledge of what had transpired over the years in the department and between the department and the STF and schools and trustees. And I think we're paying the price of that now, Mr. Minister, so it is not surprising — and I just want it on the record — that basically what we're going to have next fall as far as core curriculum is concerned is that the credits in grade 10 will go up from 21 to 24. There may be the odd piloting here or there. But that's basically it. So that . . . Well now you shake your head and you say no.

I'd like to know exactly what is going to happen. Can you tell me how many pilot projects are you going to have in social studies. How many pilot projects are you going to have in math? In what grades, where? In-service training, has it been done? What has been done with the pilot projects that are carrying on right now, for example, the grade 9 social studies or the grade 9 history? There is great controversy about that curriculum right now; there is some concern as to the value of that curriculum or whether it should be rewritten.

You give no assurances to the teachers out there and to the trustees and school boards that you have things in hand and that you're ready to move come September. And you can't start September unless you have the in-service training with the teachers. How are you going to have the in-service training with the teachers if the curricula aren't written?

So you may as well come clean and say: well all right, we just aren't ready and there's going to be very little done — so that everybody knows — and all right, then we'll move from now on; we'll start moving and get the curricula ready; we'll do the pilot projects so that in the following year, with the time span of about 15 to about 18 months, maybe even more, our teachers then can be ready for the 1989 school term. If you're not ready, tell them.

I've had a number of letters, and copies, sent to me that were addressed to you, of real concern that people have about the core curriculum and its implementation. Many think the \$1 million that you have for in-service is not nearly sufficient if you expect to implement the core curriculum this fall.

But I can see now, Mr. Minister, why there's only \$1 million in it — because you're not ready to implement it. You're simply saying, yes, we'll do some in-service training and have some maybe teachers come in and do some writing and so on, but we're basically not ready. And that's maybe why you only have \$1 million in the budget. Maybe teachers out there are right, then, not to expect too much this fall, but I wish you'd tell them. If it's other than that, Mr. Minister, will you please tell us?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well when you did your summary of what's going to happen, you conveniently ignored the number one point, and that was the implementation of the common essential learnings this fall. That was the two things I talked about for this fall, specifically, as relate to school — common essential learnings, and the in-service will focus entirely around those; and as well the raising of the standards.

For the hon. member's information — and I see he's pulling the *Directions* book out — maybe what you ought to look at in there is check the recommendations relative to the time lines on common essential learnings, and you'll find that we are in fact ahead of schedule relative to what was laid out in *Directions*, point number one.

Point number two, he says 1 million isn't enough. I dare say, Mr. Chairman, given the socialist mentality over there — the ungrateful bunch that they are — it wouldn't have mattered if we'd have put 10 million in the budget. They'd have still said it was too little, too late.

You've got to do better than that, hon. member. You really do have to do better. I say to you, that \$1 million is over and above what boards and teachers spend this very day. And I would say to you that's very substantial. You will say it's not enough; others will say it not enough; I'll say \$1 million is very substantive.

Thirdly, you want to know the specifics, what really is happening. Well, I'll read off specifically to you what's happening in the curriculum development.

You pretend like you don't know about piloting, etc. You're a former teacher. I'm sure you know the process well. Development will continue in the following areas in '88-89: language arts, kindergarten to grade 5; social studies, grade 6, 9, and 10; science, kindergarten to grade 5 and grade 10; arts education, second year of pilot, K through 5 and begin development on grade 9 and 10; health, complete middle years curriculum and AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) education in middle years and secondary program; in physical education and math, development of policy and scope of sequence; business education, continued development of secondary program; computer education, policy development and implementation, support documents completed; work experience, implementation of guide-lines; and on Indian and Metis education, the implementation of native studies 10, pilot of native studies 20; implementation of phase 2 of in-service; continued curriculum development in conjunction with core development, and the finalization of that policy, Mr. Chairman.

So there are some specifics. You see, you tried to suggest that because of restructuring of the department last year . . . I mean this is an old line.

I'm interested in output and that's what the people are interested in, and that is the output. They have been very, very busy. I've heard nothing but good over the development of this core curriculum — very busy. They've got a hold of the process; they've laid out some time lines; they know where they're headed, and they're headed in conjunction with the overall committee.

And you would suggest that somehow we don't have enough people in the department to handle this. And yet what does the blue book show under vote 5, item 8, Mr. Chairman? It says we've gone from 35 person-years here to 51. That's because we are committed to this process. And you could twist it and warp it for your own political purposes as you so wish, but I'm telling you we're ahead

of the time line set out in *Directions*. We have the staff to do the job. I don't know, at any given moment I probably have four dozen or more curriculum developers on staff.

Why won't you acknowledge some of that? We're on schedule. There's going to be the flexibility there on the meeting of those standards, and the people want to see this change. I suspect when it happens that we're going to have to . . . During this next few months we're going to have to make sure the parents clearly understand what all this change is about. And we're working with SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) and STF to make sure that we keep the public informed. But it's an exciting agenda and one that ought not to be pooh-poohed, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Chairman, all I asked the minister was to answer to me where he was at with core curriculum and he tees off on the audacity of this member here to ask him those questions. That's exactly what everybody is complaining about out there. As soon as they start asking you what are your plans for this or what are your plans for that, you come rearing off with, what do you guys think asking; who do you think you are? Who do people in the STF think they are asking me, the minister? I know best.

Mr. Minister, that's exactly what I said to you the other day. That is your problem — you think you know best. You think you have all the answers and that is why you can't speak to anybody. You only hear yourself but you don't hear anybody else.

I didn't say these things. I am sure that the STF was full of praise for you when you fired all those people; I'm sure the SSTA was just full of praise for you for firing all those people. That's not what I read in the media.

(1930)

Oh surely you're not going to blame the STF and the trustees association for being concerned about the core curriculum and its implementation when it criticized you of holus-bolus firing those people. You fired a whole bunch of people who meant a lot to the practitioners out there. They meant a lot, and I think you should accept that criticism, and say yes, we made a mistake.

And now after firing all those people and you have no one left to do your work for you, then you go out and hire a whole bunch of people; then you hire a whole bunch of people. And I've got the list here. You provided them for me.

Now surely all of those people that were in the Department of Education before weren't incompetent people; weren't the people that couldn't develop curricula; weren't the people that didn't have any knowledge about how to do these things and how to proceed. Why did you have to fire them all holus-bolus?

That's what the STF was concerned about and that's what the SSTA was concerned about. Wasn't me that was criticizing you when I was out there in the school system. These were the people that were saying hey, look at, hold on a bit, you don't understand how we develop curriculum and curricula in this province. And by firing all those

people you're doing a disservice not only to those people but to the Department of Education.

Mr. Minister, I notice however for the people that you hired, I would like to . . . We haven't got the time, but I'd like to know what experience many of these people have that they're being paid 52,000 and 58,000, 54,000, 64,000, 64,000.

Were they educators, by and large? Were they in the school systems? Were they principals? Because at a class 6, the most that they could make would be about 43 or \$44,000. Who are these people, on the whole, that you have hired? Where are they from? What is their experience? I don't want to go through individual names, but I'm sure you have the list there.

Could you just tell me if we go down the list of people that you're paying 52, 58, 54, 64, 64,000, 67 — I know that individual and I was very pleased you hired him, as he is at least somebody that has a great amount of experience out there and was one individual that has been doing a lot in getting ready for core curriculum.

Now would you mind telling me: who are some of these people, where are they from, and why did they have to be hired? Why did you have to hire that many? Was it to replace those that you let go? And how did you find all these people, and why do we have to pay them these kinds of salaries?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well in so far as the restructuring of the department that went on a year ago . . .

An Hon. Member: — They called it restructuring — firing all those people.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the hon. member says firing people, and quite frankly, that's a misuse of terms because . . .

An Hon. Member: — What do you call it? That's exactly what happened.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — And the hon. member from Saskatoon University said that's exactly what happens. And he knows that's also untrue because I defy any one of those members to go and find an employee's record, whose position was abolished, where it says in their record that they were fired, because that's unfair to the individuals. That's quite unfair to the individuals, because to be fired suggests that you somehow weren't doing your job.

These individuals . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . it wasn't that at all. The majority of those who left the employ of advanced education and Education last year took . . . it was of their volition. They took early retirement. Now if the hon. members can't distinguish between early retirement and firing, then I say help us somebody, because to use firing is absolutely a misnomer — absolutely. That's a simplistic example of political rhetoric only to be used to try and configure some kind of image in the public's mind about a hard-hearted government, and it isn't fair.

If there are some qualifications, specifically, you would like me to go over of current officials, you'll have to name some names and I'll have to send it over to you, because, quite frankly, I didn't come with the curriculum vitae of several hundred departmental staff. I probably have the curriculum vitae of the top, the executive-level staff, but you'll have to name some names if you want specific curriculum vitae because I'd have to send them to you.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Minister, I don't want, as you and I have discussed some time ago, we don't want to discuss individual people if we don't have to. It's not my intent to do that.

Could you tell me, Mr. Minister, were most of these people hired from other departments in government or were they hired out in the field? Were they educators in the field? Maybe . . . I don't want individuals. Generally speaking, were they hired from other departments; were they hired practitioners; were they teachers in the field?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well if I look at the first eight at the list that I sent across to you, with 17, for example, the first 1, 2, 3 are on the post-secondary side, with the exception of the third person who handles everything because it's a human resources, administrative position. After that, the rest . . . the next two are regional directors who were practitioners, and the next three are all practitioners. And then after that, you're out of the curriculum side.

Mr. Rolfes: — Now, Mr. Minister, I'm not going to get into the details of why we have to . . . That's the other thing that bothers me a bit. The reasons I'm asking these questions is that very often we are reluctant to hire the people who are right in the class-room.

To hire a principal or hire a director or regional director is a little different than hiring the actual practitioner, the teacher in the class-room. I think we overlook them very often, and we think we have to pay these high salaries by hiring regional directors and the others — nothing wrong with those people, but many times they are not in the class-room themselves. So I'm not sure that we need to hire the regional directors as opposed to, let's say, for curriculum development, as opposed to teachers in the class-room.

Mr. Minister, the other day I asked you also for a list of your own personal staff and I remember you saying that you didn't have it, but I've got it here now, and I thank you for it. But I did recall you making a comment that, oh, I think it only included one person that got a raise from my personal staff. Looking at this, Mr. Minister, very quickly, I see that there were 1, 2, 3, 4 — four people who received raises, some very slight raises, but . . . So, Mr. Minister, if . . .

An Hon. Member: — One's for \$2 and one's for six . . .

Mr. Rolfes: — Well I don't know . . . All I'm saying is they got raises. I don't know why they got raises, but maybe that's all they are worth.

Mr. Minister, I want to, very quickly . . . I think it is fair for me to say and to go out and say to the teachers that,

generally speaking, not to be overly concerned about, come September, being asked to implement the core curriculum to any great extent. I think that is fair to say, except for those pilot projects that are presently being done. We will continue with those, and we will have in-service training, possibly, for those teachers that will have to implement the curriculum in that area. But other than that, teachers shouldn't have to worry too much about having to implement the core curriculum.

You talk about common essential learnings, Mr. Minister. Those common essential learnings, generally speaking, although not explicitly, implicitly have been in the curriculum for many, many years — many years, except, for example, maybe technological literacy, which many schools can't carry out now anyway because of the cut-backs in the EDF (educational development fund) program — had to cut their computer program. And if you don't believe me, I've got the letters here of a number of school systems who indicated they had to cut their computer program because of lack of funds.

So when you say that we're going to carry on with these common essential learnings, that is one area that they probably won't. But critical and creative thinking — I mean, any teacher that didn't teach creative and critical thinking certainly hasn't been doing their job. I mean, that's been done for . . . I mean, in English, you mean to tell me they didn't teach creative and critical thinking? Of course they have.

You know, I mean communications . . . communications. Of critical, you must admit, you were very critical of me. You were very critical of me, and you say I was very critical of you. I mean, that proves my point, that critical thinking has been taught in the school systems.

Numeracy simply means the excellence with numbers, and again, that's been done over the years. Independent learning, personal and social values and skills — Mr. Minister, to some extent these common essential learnings have been in the curriculum for a number of years. I am glad to see that we are going to emphasize or re-emphasize them again. But if you're going to say that that is one of the major things that's going to happen this fall, as it pertains to core curriculum, then I think we're going to be sadly disappointed in the school systems and so are the teachers in the class-room.

Mr. Minister, I want to turn to another topic. No sense us continuing with the core curriculum; obviously we're going to differ. But I think from *Hansard* themselves, the teachers can make their own summations from what you've said.

Mr. Minister, I want to talk very . . . turn very quickly — our time is limited — to pensions. Could you tell me, in maybe 1 or 2 or 3 reasons, why you feel, or the government felt, that the teachers' pensions have to be privatized. What is wrong with the pension plans as we have . . . as they have been handled and conducted and invested over the years? Why do you feel now suddenly that we have to privatize the pension plans at a cost to the individuals in the pension plans?

Up until now, the administrative cost has been borne by

government; now they will be borne by the various pension groups. Could you elicit for me, very quickly, two or three reasons, valid reasons, as to why the pension plans have to be privatized or are in the process of being privatized?

(1945)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — The hon. member covered a number of subjects there, not the least of which was my personal staff. And just to be fair, you've counted as a pay raise somebody who got a \$2.67 raise per month, and that probably had something to do with their Canada Pension Plan deductions or something. I don't mind you raising legitimate points, but let's be fair.

The reason I said, to my knowledge, there was only one that really truly received a raise was because my present chief of staff had not been my chief of staff before, and in so becoming chief of staff, it was a promotion, and hence she got a raise because of it. Other than that, the only other raises that would be there would be the normal increment. So if you call those raises here, then when we're discussing the Public Service Commission, you would have to call increments that all public servants get raises, and I don't know as that's normally considered raises. You can tell me differently, if you think so, but I'm sure public service would be quite happy to hear that. I just wanted to get that on the record, Mr. Chairman.

The other point that I want to get on the record . . . In fact I may even consider sending your comments and mine to all teachers in Saskatchewan because I would have to wonder how the teaching profession and the 12,000 teachers would feel about you, as the Education critic, pooh-poohing, writing off as an insignificant initiative, something that they feel very strongly about — and that is the common essentials learnings. You have written it off as somehow insignificant. I would suggest to you that you're undermining a very important process, you're undermining a very important initiative, and that's unfortunate. It's one that all the players in education have spent a good deal of time on. They're going to spend even more time on it. It's an important initiative for our children and certainly for their future. I guess you and I will have to agree to disagree on the importance of that initiative, but I'll stack it up with the teachers' view of that any time, and I think it's important that I make your view and mine known to them in that regard.

And finally, once again, the hon. member tried to suggest that because of the fact that we've stretched the excellence fund or the educational development fund over 10 years, that somehow school boards have stopped important initiatives. That's not true, and he used the example of computers, Mr. Chairman. And I want to show you how false his accusation is.

I, in my home the other day, received a four-page pamphlet or brochure from the Regina school board. And on the front page of that they had a graph at the bottom that showed . . . a bar graph that showed the number of computers that they've put into schools in their system in Regina here over the last seven or eight years. And the bar graphs start, I think, in 1980 with a very small number, and it just went up like that, Mr. Chairman. And why I use

that example is because that's not some kind of government propaganda, but what that showed to me and to my family and to my children who attend Regina public schools, is that despite the rhetoric of the member opposite — despite the rhetoric — that school boards continue to go onward and upward in terms of computer literacy for our children. Year over, they have shown every year an increase in the number of computers they've put in schools.

Now I ask you, Mr. Chairman, how does the hon. member opposite square that with his sweeping accusation that somehow because the educational development fund has been stepped out over 10 years that there's computer programs falling by the wayside. How does he square that, Mr. Chairman? He probably squares that the same way that he'll have to square his comments on the common essential learnings with the teachers of this province, and, more importantly, the students of this province.

And I want to tell you, Mr. Chairman, this is a feature of socialists. They can go on for hours and hours in this legislature — as they did last year in Education estimates. We've already been in estimates in Education this year probably close to six hours, and I would ask you, Mr. Chairman — because I suspect you've sat here for many of those hours — I would ask you: how often has any one of those critics over there used the word children or students? I ask you. They can go on for hours and hours and hours and never really talk about the thing that's most important — the child, the student. We saw that as a feature of the debate last time that went on in this House for 45 hours or something of that magnitude, Mr. Chairman, and we've seen it again.

Mr. Chairman, we're interested in pursuing this new direction, these changes, because of our children and our children's future and we will not be deterred in that goal, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Minister, how you can twist what someone says! Now, it's no wonder you are held in such low regard by people out there — it's no wonder. You know you are, if I could use the word in here . . .

An Hon. Member: — Windbag.

Mr. Rolfes: — Well, yes that's what I . . . Windbag. But I had a different word for him. Coming from the veterinary medicine field, there lies your strength, if you know what I mean — a backhand compliment to you.

I tell the hon. member that if that's the way you twist the words of teachers and trustees out there, it's no wonder that someone doesn't have any high regard for you.

Why don't you listen, why don't you listen? Mr. Minister, I said to you, these weren't my words. But there have been severe cut-backs in education. And I have a whole list of letters, some of which you have received, some of which the Premier has received, and many of which I have also received. I want to spend a little bit of time later on if we have time.

Here is one school district. They said the following. Yes,

the member opposite will be very familiar with this one because it comes from the Wilkie local staff — and here it is. Here they say the following programs were cut altogether: special education, grades 7, 8, and 9; music, grades 8 and 9; art 10; accounting 26; general math 20; psychology 20 and 30; Christian ethics 20 and 30; economics 20; industrial arts 35. All have been cut because, they say, of cut-backs to education.

Mr. Minister, these aren't my words, and I could go on and on. As I say, I have a whole slew of letters here where people indicate where because of the EDF program, the cut-backs in the EDF program, they had to cut those programs. And many mention computer programs that they've cut back in the program.

Mr. Minister, what I said, just to clarify the thing, what I said was that common essential learnings — everyone, everyone has incorporated those common essential learnings. What we are doing in the new core curriculum is to re-emphasize those. But if that is all that you are going to do, if that is all that you're going to do for the core curriculum, then, Mr. Minister, you have not satisfied, you have not satisfied the demands of the people out there. That is not what they want for their children, that is not what they want in the fall of 1988.

Secondly, Mr. Minister, I want you to turn to your personal staff. I want you to turn to your personal staff. You said there was only one that received an increase. I don't know, but the third one on your list went from 3,274 to 3,397. That was a \$123 a month increase, other than the other one that you were referring to who you said that she, I guess, got different responsibilities. So it's not true to say that only one. There were at least two that got substantial increases.

An Hon. Member: — I said, other than that, they were just increments.

Mr. Rolfes: — Well if \$123 a month is an increment, okay, fine. I will buy that then, if that's what it was.

Mr. Minister, I asked you about pensions, why they were privatized. In all your side-tracking and trying to misconstrue what I was saying, you forget entirely about the pensions.

My question to you was, Mr. Minister, give me two or three reasons why pensions had to be privatized. Could you address yourself to pensions, please?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, relative to the pensions, the reason that the negotiations or the discussions, if you like, have been instituted is not because of some wish particularly by the government but more by the teachers themselves. And I think what they see in this new structure would be less government and more of the profession, if you like, in charge.

And as I understand, no matter which pension fund has been looked at, the view has been the same. They see it as a chance to get it a little arm's length from government and have themselves more in control of their own destiny. And it's not something that we've been trying to ram their throats certainly. They tend to want to

go that way.

Other than that, I don't know as I can be much more specific, because the Minister of Finance tends to be involved in the discussions, and you may want to put your question to him more directly.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Minister, I will do that, but, Mr. Minister, I think you're totally misinformed on that.

There was no initiative, as far as I know, by teachers. Teachers were very satisfied with the way the pensions were being handled by government, the way the money had been invested. They were very . . . felt very secure.

I have talked to a number of teachers. I've also talked to members of the STF. It is not my impression that they wanted this at their initiative — that it was the government that had called the various groups together and said hey, look at, we want to privatize the pensions, we want to get out of them — and you will be paying the administration costs.

And if your impression, Mr. Minister, is that it was the teaching group out there that wanted the pensions privatized, you are mistaken, because they don't. They were very pleased with the . . . If you want me to, I'll certainly check with the STF again, because I just talked to them last week, and they have some very serious concerns about pensions being privatized. And, I think, one phone call from you can put a stop to that very quickly and leave it the way it is.

I as a teacher am also very concerned about it because I think that the investments that we have received over the years have been very good, and the plan has, we feel, some security in knowing that the government is directly responsible for the plan.

So if that is your understanding, I think it's a misunderstanding. Do you want to comment on that or do you want to leave it?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well I don't have any more to say about that, particularly. As I said, you may want to put your questions more directly to the Minister of Finance. And your understanding and mine are different.

I doubt, though, that you would give our government credit for the supplementary estimate, the \$19.3 million that we put into the teachers' pension fund last year as a result of these prudent investments that were made by the fund, and the 19.3 that they lost as a result of the collapse, the October collapse of the stock market.

You know, we get a lot of berating for our commitment to the pension plan and what goes in over and above the 7 per cent, etc., etc. But I never hear but one good word when probably, legally, we did not have to do that but morally we felt obligated to, and we put \$19.3 million in. That's what the supplementary estimate is all about, but not one word by you on that — not one word. And I think that was a pretty handsome and moral, if you like, commitment on our part.

I want to get back to Wilkie though, for a minute, because I heard what you were saying about all these cut-backs. And as you will know — and I'm not trying to pass the buck — but these are board decisions that they make in terms of their configuration. And the hon. member smiles, and I say I'm not trying to pass the buck because he used the term, Mr. Chairman, and I quote him, "severe cut-backs in education". Well what's his definition of severe? I have the grants that Wilkie received last year and this year and they went from 2.5 million, roughly, Mr. Chairman, to 2.6 million. Now, if my arithmetic serves me right — if my schooling and the common essentials learnings, specifically numeracy, has served me at all well — that translates in my books to a 1.56 per cent increase or nearly 2 per cent.

But the hon. member would say but yes, yes, yes; but what about the education development fund? For example, Mr. Chairman, in 1985 Wilkie received \$65,575. If we move now to say, 1987, what do we find, Mr. Chairman? Ninety-eight thousand, three hundred and thirty-five. And in 1985, Mr. Chairman, what do we find? Over 106,000. Now the way I understand that, if they are receiving in '85, \$65,575 and this year they receive 106,121, unless I haven't learned my math, Mr. Chairman, that's — what? — a 35, \$40,000 increase. Now how would the hon. member square that with his observations and his rhetoric? I don't think he can, Mr. Chairman.

I'm not trying to suggest for a moment that we didn't stretch that fund out. But I say much better to have stretched it out over 10 years than to have eliminated it totally, because that's the fund that is putting computers and books into our schools, Mr. Chairman. My only regret with that fund is the name we gave to it. Everybody refers to it as EDF or education development fund. It should be called an excellence fund because it helps our children pursue excellence with books and resources for their libraries and computers.

So I just wanted to set the record straight for the hon. member, on that school board particularly.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Minister, you can do all you want. The teachers and schools boards had all planned over a five-year program. They had committed themselves to the program, and you unilaterally made the decision.

(2000)

And I complimented you the other day on the EDF program. I complimented him on it the other day, on the EDF program. But he thinks that I should also compliment him when he makes a promise before the election that there will be an EDF program, five-year program. Immediately after the election they stretched it to 10 years. On the one hand I complimented him for initiating it, and he wants me on the other hand to compliment him also when he stretches it to 10 years.

Now, Mr. Minister, you won an election on some of these promises that you've made, and there should not be . . . You shouldn't now be surprised when teachers out there are very concerned and are very angry with you. It was a

good program, it was a good announcement. I know the elation that there was out in the schools because I happened to be out in the schools — and the things that we could do with that kind of a fund. But I was not in the schools when you stretched it to 10 years, and I can also imagine the anger that there was in the various school districts.

Now Mr. Minister, I also spent some time in the Tisdale school district, and they listed a number, a number of programs that they had to cut, a number of teachers that they had to cut. I was also in the Nipawin school district and they also mentioned the very fact that they had to cut programs that they had expected to implement because of the EDF program. And that, Mr. Minister, goes throughout the province of Saskatchewan. Now surely if I compliment you on the one hand of implementing it, you should be able to take a little bit of criticism when you change the rules of the game.

Mr. Minister, the other thing is you said that, oh, you wanted a compliment of the \$19 million you put in. How much money did you take out of the teachers' fund that earned more than 7 per cent? Millions of dollars were taken out that you didn't put in. Now surely if something drastically happens to the pension funds and you had taken out millions that were earned by the pension fund, then on the other hand, you shouldn't expect compliments, you know, when you put in \$19 million. You took out a lot more than 19 million that was earned over 7 per cent.

Mr. Minister, I will leave the pension funds because, as you say, that's basically the Minister of Finance, and I will ask him some questions when his estimates come up.

Mr. Minister, I want to turn very quickly to another area. And here, Mr. Minister, I hope that we can keep the rhetoric down. You have a number of areas in the province where there are some problems between division boards and local boards, and there really are no mechanisms available to resolve the situation other than through the election process, and that sometimes doesn't work.

If, for example, there is a difference of opinion as to closure of schools or redrawing of boundaries — particular closure of schools — between a division board and a local board, the local board really is at the mercy of that division board.

And the one that I want to bring up, because I told them that I would, is the Success, Pennant problem. Now my understanding is that they have resolved some of that where the division board had planned on bussing the children to Swift Current, a total mileage, I believe, of about 45 miles one way. — or is it 30 miles one way, I'm not sure, it might be 30 miles one way, there's another district involved — but for five-year-olds and six-year-olds being on the bus for about at least three hours a day. And the parents were objecting to that. And I have some sympathy with them on that, having five- and six-year-olds sitting on the bus that long.

Mr. Minister, is there no mechanism available, or should we implement some method whereby disputes like this

can be resolved, where a local board at least has someone that they can turn to? I know they came to you, and you rightly so — I'm not criticizing — you rightly said, look that's not my problem, that's not my problem — some words to that effect — and rightly so. But should we not look at maybe implementing some mechanism, some method to resolve those disputes?

And I know you have others because I have received letters from others. So I think it's something that can be done so that the local boards have at least some avenue that they can go to or some person that they can go to or some mechanism that they can use to say, hey, look it, maybe arbitration is the answer or conciliation or something to that effect — some person or some mechanism they can use to try and resolve the dispute.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the hon. member asks a legitimate question and, certainly, one relative to school bussing and routes and boundaries and some of those kind of disputes that get raised with me over the course of a year, as minister, on many, many occasions.

The first sign, I suppose, that some trustees might be unhappy with a given decision or a contemplated decision, if they feel they can't get it reversed to their satisfaction at the local board level, they almost always, and perhaps rightly so, turn to the Minister of Education. And I get a lot of correspondence on some of these questions.

Having said that, almost . . . well not almost, with rare exception my reply is the same to all, and that is that local boards . . . this falls within their jurisdiction. It is up to them to plan the configuration and the school bus routes and those kinds of things, Mr. Chairman, as we all know.

Having said all of that, I know there are probably some instances where boards maybe haven't been as flexible or as understanding as they maybe should have been or could have been in the past. I think of an example, even in my own constituency — and once again I'm not criticizing the board because I wasn't sitting in their chairs — but it seemed like such a tragedy when because of the rules if you like, a young couple with 3 or 4 or 5 young children became so distraught with the rules and the inflexibility of the rules, they ended up — and they lived along grid road — they ended up building a brand-new house on the opposite side of the road. They happened to own land on both sides, and in one case you're in one boundary, in another case, the other side. And they ended up building a brand-new house to get around the rules. And I thought to myself, you know, there's got to be something wrong when the system was that inflexible. And I say that, not being Minister of Education at the time and not having access to all the information that local boards did, but it certainly seemed to me that there was perhaps something gone astray there, at least there was a perception of that.

How does one handle these situations if in fact the local boards and the trustees or the concerned parents can't come to some satisfactory resolve? There is a mechanism, and that is that a boundaries commission can be struck. It's used extremely rarely because it's . . . I suppose it's

tantamount to bringing in back-to-work legislation, because what you're saying is I'm going to usurp the board's local authority and local autonomy. So it's very rarely used — very, very rarely used.

I think the example that you're referring to, the Pennant, Success, Swift Current rural, is one of those kinds of example that's generated a fair amount of discussion and letter-writing and meetings, and meetings with my Legislative Secretary and perhaps even with yourself from some of the people from that area.

My understanding is, as is so often the case, that the local board and the concerned parents, particularly those from Pennant have resolved it on their own. They've come to a solution. It may not be the preferred one in everyone's mind, but I think it's now one that . . . they have a game plan that everyone seems to be able to agree on. And I know that that was one of those very emotional examples, as so often they always are. But I think they've come to a satisfactory resolve on that one, and it's been handled once again without Regina or central government interference, and for that I'm thankful and pleased, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rolfes: — Yes, I think the Pennant, Success one has been resolved, but not to everyone's satisfaction, I think as you indicated. That's not the point, Mr. Minister. It has caused a lot of hostility in that area, a lot of hostility, and people are out, you know, gunning for some of those people in the elections.

And I think we've got to find some other method other than the boundaries commission. Can't we look at something else that the local board can turn to once they have used pretty well all their options, before it gets to the stage that I think Pennant, Success got to? I mean, these people were extremely concerned — extremely concerned.

I wish, Mr. Minister, that in that particular instance, though, that you would have felt that you could have met with those people. They came to Regina, and I know you were in town, but you didn't meet with them. I think just to show them, hey, look, yes, I've got some understanding; there's nothing I can do, nothing I can do under the present circumstances; and we've got to work these things through, but yes, I'll try and look at something, some other mechanism that maybe we can come up with. I won't guarantee you anything, but I agree that we shouldn't allow these disputes to get to the stage where we cause a lot of hostility amongst friends. And I know, under the present circumstances, there wasn't very much you could do, but I thought the least you could have done was to meet with them.

Mr. Minister, you didn't answer the question for me again. In your opinion, isn't there something that you should maybe look at, or are you prepared to look at something other than the boundaries commission to try and resolve some of these situations? And just to wash your hands of it and say, well, that's division board's responsibility and not mine — maybe the time has come that we look at some method. And I don't know what it is, but goodness, you tell me you've got all those officials in your department who are highly intelligent. And I see the

deputy minister agreeing, at least smiling, and I don't blame him for that.

But really, seriously, can't we come up with something or at least give some thought to it because this won't be the last dispute that you'll hear of if — well, it may be the last dispute that you will hear of — but, you know, can't you come up with something at least, or at least look at something that we can try and resolve some of these problems?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I can't resist, Mr. Chairman. The hon. member suggests that it might be the last dispute that I would deal with, and I just want him to know that rumours of my demise, as Mark Twain might have said, are highly exaggerated.

Relative to the meeting with the concerned parents from the Swift Current region, I had my Legislative Secretary attend on my behalf at that meeting, and he did a very good job for me, thank you. And as well, I think it's safe to say, in this and in many other instances, the role of our regional directors, working in co-operation and in conjunction with the local boards and the directors and the local trustees, very often probably prevent 99.5 per cent of these from ever surfacing into any issue, because there is that co-operative spirit. And I think very often that the regional director can come in and have cooler heads prevail because sometimes these things get quite emotional. And in this circumstance, in this instance, the regional director, Brian Keegan, had done a very good job, I think, of trying to finding a mutually acceptable solution, if you like, working in conjunction with the board and local trustees.

(2015)

I must say, and I would say I would extend my compliments to him and to other regional directors who do . . . they serve many roles out there. But one of them is this trouble-shooting kind of role, and I know in many instances they solve these problems long before you and I would ever hear of them. I think too often that role goes unrecognized, if you like.

In so far as you're asking me would I be prepared to look at some other mechanism or some other process, if you're asking me if it be my nature, as opposed to perhaps the socialist approach, if I would be more interventionist, my answer would be no. If you're asking me if the trustees themselves sense that this was an issue that was arising too often and that they felt more needed to be done, if they came with the suggestion because of that, then I would certainly give it serious consideration. But at this point in time I would be . . . without some pretty serious recommendation coming forward from the umbrella organization of directors or of trustees, my first inclination would not be to get into that.

Because in addition to the boundaries commission that one can put in place, other tools are there according to The Education Act, one of which is you can hold an inquiry. When the Yorkton situation, which you may be somewhat familiar with, when they couldn't find . . . the three boards couldn't find a satisfactory resolve, and it was very complex because of operating agreements and

all kinds of things like that, Brian Ward, who I think was a former deputy minister of the Department of Education, was called in to be the mediator, and he successfully mediated that. I think we've seen similar kinds of processes put in place; for Northern Lights, we had the Scharf report, before that the Burnett report.

So there are some tools there. They're used sparingly because we do very, very much respect local autonomy, and for me to do more, to become more interventionist, to ask for more tools without the trustees saying yes, we want that kind of intervention, I'd be hard pressed to do that as a departmental initiative, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Minister, I don't know what possess the minister in making everything political — everything political. He can't give you one straight answer. And again, Mr. Minister, it's ample proof, it's ample proof, why you are so disliked out there. If someone had asked you . . . if someone out there at a public meeting had asked you the question that I did, and you gave that kind of an answer, as you are prone to do from what I hear, it's no wonder that you're held in such low regard by the teachers and the trustees out there.

I asked you, I asked you very sincerely if you would put your officials to work. I didn't ask you to intervene. I didn't ask you to intervene. And with your attitude, I wished you wouldn't intervene. But all I asked you to do was from your experience as a minister. You hear of all the problems. Individual trustees in their divisions don't hear all the problems so naturally they're not going to make recommendations to you. But you, as the minister who hears of these problems, comes to grips with these problems. All I asked you to do is would you give consideration . . . not to implement but to take before the trustees association and say, hey look it, I've had a half a dozen problems, or I've had a dozen problems and they haven't been amicably resolved, it's caused a fair amount of hostility, wondered whether you people would consider these. Is this a different process? Is this a process possibly that we can use so that communities don't have to tear themselves apart. I didn't ask you to intervene at all.

What I'm asking you to do is to put the resources that you have at your disposal to address some of the problems that exist out there. Parents who are extremely concerned at the local board level when decisions are made by the division board, which they have a right to make. But there's a difference of opinion as to how those problems should be addressed. And when local boards feel that they have no alternative for the welfare of their kids, they're saying to me as the critic, and they're saying to you as the minister, isn't there another way that we can deal with these situations so that we have the welfare of our children at heart? And you're simply saying, no, I'm not going to do that — you want me to politically intervene? Are you . . . no, I'm not going to do that.

I'm not asking you to intervene. All I'm asking you is to use your good offices, your officials, to see if we can come up with some other process in trying to resolve these problems. But, obviously, you don't have any more interest in his area than . . . Well I shouldn't expect that you would have any more interest in it. The minister takes

this very lightly, but I can tell you that the people in Pennant and Success and other areas sure as the heck don't.

And I'll tell you, Mr. Minister, they were very disheartened driving all the way in, knowing full well that you were in the building, and that you refused to meet with them. You had lots of opportunity. You had all afternoon when you were in the House, here. They were willing to meet with you at any time of the day, any time of the day. All you had to do is mention the time. They met with me, and it took only half an hour of my time. And, Mr. Minister . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, I was concerned about their problems. And they asked me if I would raise the situation with you to see if you would look at another process. Not for them any more, because their problem has basically been resolved, but they've gone through a heck of a lot because they didn't want their children to be on the buses for three hours a day.

And all the minister can say is, well I'm just not going to be concerned about it. Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I will send your words to the people of Pennant and Success and, as I say, if that's your nonchalant, non-caring attitude, I can well understand why people don't think very highly of you as the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, Mr. Chairman, one can only draw one conclusion from what he has just said, and that is that somehow he doesn't have faith in the local government administration of our . . . of school boards across this province. And he doesn't have faith in trusteeship and trustees and all that it means. He's saying that he doesn't have faith in the tools that are in place.

What he is saying is that — and this is an interesting paradox, Mr. Chairman, because for the first six hours that we were in this examination of estimates he said the problem with me — at least in his mind, and I've got lots of problems, and I'll be the first to admit — he said the problems with me as the Minister of Education is that I'm prone, or I make unilateral decisions, I don't consult, I don't collaborate, I don't co-operate, I just decide I know what's best, and that's the way it will be and that's what shall be done, is what I decree. That's his words; I'm paraphrasing, Mr. Chairman. Hence he spent the first six hours saying that to this legislature, that all the decisions are being made in head office and never mind what the people are saying.

Now this is your classic example of socialist logic — classic example. That kind of criticism worked fine when he was wanting to make a particular point. Now all of a sudden, he's the defender of head office education, that the people in Regina somehow know better than the trustees, that we should intervene. That's what you're saying.

On the one hand you say, don't make decisions in isolation and insulation in Regina, collaborate, co-operate — which is what we do, quite frankly. In the next breath he is there saying, intervene, never mind trusteeship, throw that out the window, never mind how well it's worked. I haven't had the trustees association come forward and say that we should design another tool

over and above boundary commission and mediators and inquires and those kinds of things that already exist.

I was happy to see in this instance that there was a satisfactory resolve to a tough situation, and it's a credit to trusteeship, once again, in this province.

Mr. Rolfes: — What an exasperating individual. What an exasperating individual. It's no wonder you got three portfolios already. You know, you just will not listen, will you.

Mr. Minister, as I indicated — oh, I see the member from Mayfair, the member from Mayfair who so successfully, ardently supports and defends our fair city of Saskatoon. Not once has he made a defence on anything in Saskatoon — not once.

Mr. Minister, the only question that I have left for you in this particular area is that if you're not going to look at trying to resolve the problems at the local level, maybe at least you could have a look at your own department and see if there is some way or some means that you could have some consultations with division boards. I said from the outset that they were certainly within their rights and no one denied that, but there's a lot of hostility that still remains and suspicion that still remains in that area. You didn't even use your good office to try and, not intervene, but try and listen to those people. No one wanted you to intervene.

But, Mr. Minister, I'm going to leave that and I've got you on record and I will tape the Hansard and I would send it out to the Pennant people and that is your response. And, you know, that's what we want; we want it on record so that they know exactly what kind of a minister they've got to deal with. No one has asked you to direct everything from your office. That's been your biggest problem, that you have unilaterally made decisions.

All I'm asking you now is to look at — that is not intervening; look at — different ways of trying to resolve the situation. And when you find something, you don't then arbitrarily implement it. But that's the way you accept them. Maybe that's the way you operate.

Now, Mr. Minister, my colleague from Saskatoon University has a few questions he would like to direct to you and I will turn it over to him now.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, my first question to you relates to the R.J.D. Williams Provincial School of the Deaf. Last year at this time I suggested to you that you ought to . . . Instead of the proposal that your staff at the senior level of your department were making to the parents and the students at the R.J.D. Williams school for the deaf, that perhaps the school for the deaf would be closed within one to two years, I suggested to you that you ought to implement a task force in this province to look at the educational needs of hearing impaired students and to look at the future of the R.J.D. Williams school for the deaf. And I want to commend you for establishing that task force. I'm pleased to see that that task force has been established; I want to congratulate you for that.

My question to you is: I see from the estimates that the

budget for this year, in effect, retains the operations of the school for the deaf throughout the coming fiscal year. Two staff positions have been eliminated. Can you give us your assurance now, Mr. Minister, that the R.J.D. Williams school for the deaf will function as we see it now for at least the next two years, that there will no significant budget cuts, certainly no phasing out of the school as was originally suggested by your senior departmental staff? Can you give us that assurance? And can you indicate when you expect to receive a report from the task force that you have established?

(2030)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, and hon. colleague from Saskatoon University, I welcome your questions tonight. Albeit your portfolio has changed as critic, I know your heart still is very much in some certain aspects of education, and particularly post-secondary education. And I was pleased to be able to respond to your suggestion, about a year ago now, relative to the task force. I said then it was a suggestion that had merit, and one, indeed, at the end of the day, I found had considerable merit.

In so far as when this task . . . Mind you, on the one hand, I could get schizoid between what you say and what your colleague says about whether we consult or we don't consult or whether we do things unilaterally. We don't do things unilaterally, but I'll leave that.

The expectations is that the task force will report by the end of December. And through this period they would be . . . And I would use this opportunity to encourage interested individuals to forward briefs to the task force. What I would see happening is that they would put together a preliminary report after these meetings and receiving these briefs, etc., put together a preliminary report, then bounce that off affected and concerned individuals to get their sense of whether they are somewhere on the right track or they're not on the right track, and then after that feedback — and I say this very sincerely — that they would then formulate a final report for our consideration.

I want to say again that my goal through all of this, if I stand back and look at the larger issue here, and that is educational services for the hearing impaired — my goal through all of this is to do better, not worse. And that's the why for the task force, if you like.

Your specific question about the numbers of person-years being down — I think it's two — is just a reflection of the enrolment at the school. And a word on that. The fact that the enrolment is down, on the one hand one could say, well does this mean we have less hearing impaired children, when the reality is fewer . . . I'm sorry, fewer hearing impaired children. The answer is probably not so. But what it's a reflection of is the successes that local boards, parents, and concerned individuals and educators — perhaps especially educators, special educators — are having at integrating these children in the traditional school model, if you like.

And so on the surface what looks like some kind of a down side, if you like, is another success story

going on, if you like, in the special education initiatives by teachers and parents with these children.

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Minister, I want to say that the process sounds reasonable. I want to urge you and the task force to involve students and parents at the school and in the hearing impaired community at large as much as possible, and I see you nodding your head. I'm pleased that you're planning to do that.

I want to make two points in closing this off. First of all, Mr. Minister, your department could be doing a lot more to advertise the very good services that the R.J.D. Williams school for the deaf offers. I think one of the reasons that enrolment is declining over and above the reason that you mentioned is that the services of the school are inadequately advertised, and that many parents of hearing impaired children are not aware that the school exists and are not aware of the services that it offers.

But I want to come back, Mr. Minister, to my initial question to you which you only partially answered, and that is: I'm asking your assurance that the R.J.D. Williams Provincial School for the Deaf will continue to operate for at least the next two years with at least its present budget in place before there are any major changes implemented. In other words, Mr. Minister, I want your assurance that throughout the task force period there'll be no further cuts at that school, and that the school's future is assured for at least another year beyond the task force filing their report — unchanged in any significant want. Can you give us your assurance, in other words, that you're not going to make any dramatic cuts to that school in the near future?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't quite understand the hon. member's question nor his logic behind his question totally. I don't say this by way of criticism.

I'm wondering in so far as you asking for a solid commitment that there'll be no cut-backs or whatever for two years, if that maybe doesn't handcuff the task force. I mean, if they come out with some sort of newer and better way of dealing with these impaired children, then I don't know as I'd want to be handcuffed to the old way, if you like.

If you're asking me for a commitment that there won't be cuts to hearing impaired children throughout the provinces, categorically as I can give that, I give it to you. But I don't know as I'd want to be handcuffed by staying with the old — if something different or better comes up in this collaborative and co-operative and consultative process that we'd be handcuffed to it.

Perhaps the question has to do with, you know, if we went from A to B . . . And I don't know as that would be the case, but if we did, would it recognize some kind of transition and be sensitive to that? And that would be uppermost in my mind as well if, in fact, that was to come to pass. So if your thinking and my thinking are on the wavelength in that regard, then I give you that much assurance.

Mr. Prebble: — Well I want to thank the minister for that assurance, because the point I want to make to the minister is that many of the children at this school, the school is a very, very central part of their life. Many of them reside in the school on a permanent basis for nine or 10 months of the year. For many others the school is an important part of their cultural life, more so than most children because they are so dependent on the educational and cultural environment of the school as a central part of their life.

And therefore what I'm urging, Mr. Minister, is that if any changes are recommended by the task force that they be implemented gradually so as not to uproot those children, and that funding not be pulled from the school. And the reason, of course, I ask these questions is that originally your officials threatened to do just that, Mr. Minister, and I'm glad to see that you're now taking a different path.

Mr. Minister, I want to ask you another question and that is with respect to the publication that your department issued called *My Daily Journal*. I wrote you about this publication, Mr. Minister, a number of months ago and at the time, you and your deputy minister declined to answer the question that was of greatest interest to me, and that is, Mr. Minister, what the cost of publishing, printing, and distributing *My Daily Journal* to junior high school students in this province was. Could you tell the House how many thousands of young people in this province received a copy of *My Daily Journal*, and what the cost was of printing and distributing that particular document to children in the province?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, Mr. Chairman, relative to *My Daily Journal*, which was circulated to grade 7 and 8 students . . . And I saw the hon. member — members, maybe — smiling somewhat relative to this project, or this little journal, *My Daily Journal*.

I would maybe just say a few words about that. I think there are some questions about its usefulness and why one might do it. If I look at one of my own children and some of her friends, their initial reaction was one of some delight and that it was something special for them and it had some food for thought, if you like, on the various pages. But like any other diary, whether you're an adult or a child, unless you keep it up, so to speak, the novelty quickly wears off. And maybe that's some of what we're faced with here.

On the other hand, I would be less than honest, too, if I didn't say that we haven't had some very positive commentary about it from all sectors, educators and others, and indeed requests from some wanting to know if we're going to repeat the project. So I offer up that commentary so that you have some sense of both sides, if you like.

How we got to where we got with the journal was that we contracted the Regina separate school board to cover the costs of development — the research, design, and that kind of thing. And for that to them we provided a grant of 37,930 or just about \$38,000, and for that we got 31,000 journals, or a little over a dollar a piece. And then we provided a further \$5,000 grant for the posters; and then they had another 1,000 posters printed up at

additional cost of \$316. So you're looking at a total cost of 40 — what? — 40, 44,000, something like that.

And I gave you the perspectives on how it has or has not been received, I think certainly from a standpoint of self-esteem and developing self-esteem, which is so important in dealing with drug and alcohol abuse, chemical abuse in those adolescent years that grade 7 and 8 represent.

I suppose I'll put it another way: if we've accomplished some small increment in terms of addressing that mega-issue, then that's \$44,000 well spent when it comes to the awful spectre of drug and alcohol abuse. But I know there's some snickering, if you like, on occasion, about it, but that's the perspectives and that's the cost — a little over \$1 a journal.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could tell us also what the distribution cost was. Or was there no distribution cost? Were you simply able to use regular deliveries that may be going out to the schools to cover the cost or was there any extra distribution costs associated with the project?

(2045)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I don't have any separate numbers for the distribution costs, but we've got a fair distribution network there relative to textbooks and everything else, so it went under that kind of process. In any given year we send out a fair amount of stuff, as you can well imagine, but I don't have a separate number broke out for you.

Mr. Prebble: — In light of the cost, my feelings about it are not as strong as they were. The cost is, I think, a little exorbitant, Mr. Minister. You might refrain in the future from publishing your picture in the front. I think you could reduce the size of the publication to perhaps about a third of what it is now. It runs at about 120 pages of relatively empty pages with a few sayings and words of advice scattered around the book.

Mr. Minister, we on this side of the House are very supportive of any initiative that might be taken to curb alcohol and drug abuse in this province. I think you could have found better ways to spend the money. I think you could have come up with a more modest publication, given the fact that this is a time when there have been many other cuts to the education system. I don't think we should be wasting money unwisely. So if you do the project in the future, would you try to keep the cost down and try to publish a more modest publication, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, just one quick comment relative to that. I think your suggestion is well taken. I mean the issue is this: it's about a \$44,000 project. Yes, if it did something on the drug and alcohol abuse side, that's good. Is there a better way to use \$44,000 on that whole drug and alcohol abuse question? There may well be and for that reason it's not something that we're about to repeat without examining all options.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to just make

a couple of comments about the journal because I've had a few people ask me about it, and I'd make comments which I think the minister would really appreciate hearing at this time about it.

The question I would like to ask the minister is: who was it that asked for it? Judging by his remarks, I think you would feel that it was a decision that was made perhaps by the minister's political staff so that they could test to see whether 44,000 children, how they would react to having the minister's picture right on the very front of this particular journal.

I suppose if he'd not put his picture in it, the thing probably wouldn't have come up at all as a matter of discussion. But the fact that he did makes it look more and more like an advertisement for the minister.

I'm asking whether he wouldn't have considered taking it out of his MLA communications allowance, like I have to any time I want to send something out across the province. Mr. Minister, did any school boards or any teachers or any students ask for this?

The other thing you mentioned was that you learned something from the experiment. I think you could have learned something from that experiment by using a test or a pilot project some place along the line, in one area of the province, or a selected area of the province, and then you could have made that particular decision. You know, it's only a \$44,000 mistake, but it could have been a lot more. It's what it represents, really, that there is objection to here.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think the hon. member has used some terminology to describe this book that I can't agree with, to call it a mistake. I don't know as it's at all a mistake.

Where did the idea come from, he asks. Experts in the field — including in terms of those who work in drug and alcohol abuse and in those who work in curriculum development, personal development, those kinds of things — obviously had some fair say in this.

In fact, if I was just to share with the hon. member, the background information I have is: these documents were part of a package consisting of a student activity program, a parent literature and a middle years principal's conference as part of our government's initiative on drug and alcohol abuse. As I said earlier, we contracted with the Regina school board to cover the research and development and design costs — not a mistake at all.

Can we use the \$44,000 better to achieve our goals relative to drug and alcohol abuse? Maybe so. At the same time, I know there's been, as I said earlier, some sniggering about this, but I can't totally ignore either the fact that we've had numerous requests for a wider distribution, also requests to repeat the journal. So I think it has had its impact.

I would be the first to admit that why my picture was in there, and if I sanctioned that — which I don't recall if I did or didn't, to be honest with you — that was the mistake, because there's no need for that in there. Not

that I am apologizing for our government's interest in drug and alcohol abuse, because I'm not.

And in fact, the latest poll — and I suspect you would find the same thing true in Canada and, indeed, in Saskatchewan and, indeed, in Prince Albert — you know, drug and alcohol abuse is the number one issue now across the U.S., and I suspect the same is true for Canada. So we don't . . . I think it has and can and did serve a worthwhile purpose.

Did we get \$44,000 worth out of it? I would suggest, yes, and then some, by quite a bit in terms of the group that it was focused at.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Are you going to do it again, Mr. Minister? And if you do it again, will you leave your picture off of the journal?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — We have no plans to do it again, but if we did, my picture won't be in it. And I hear what the hon. member's saying about, it was a good likeness, but having said all of that, it won't go in again.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Minister, one of the students looked at the picture and the question he asked me: how long a term did he get? That's not true, Mr. Minister; I'll retract those words.

Mr. Minister, I want to now turn to the final report, the final report of the Local Government Finance Commission, September, 1986. And this was headed by Ray Clayton, as you know, and I won't read the other members.

Minister, the reason I want to turn to that report and not in any real detail, Mr. Minister, is because I have said to you time and time again that the operating grants over the last number of years have simply not kept pace with inflation and that when you have a 2.1 per cent increase, on average, in operating grants, this puts tremendous pressure on the local boards to increase taxes. And they've had to; there is just no other way of doing it.

Mr. Minister, I want to read to you . . . In case you haven't read the report, I want to read to you from chapter 4 on some of the things that the commission had said. Mr. Minister, I start with chapter 4, page 149. And this is what the commission said:

However, the commission is concerned about the level of expenditures that are recognized in the formula (the level of expenditures that are recognized in the formula, foundation formula). Over the years, recognized expenditures have fallen behind actual average expenditures of school divisions. In 1985, the total foundation formula recognition for items other than pupil transportation and tuition fee expense amounted to \$524.1 million while the actual expenditures of school divisions for the corresponding categories amounted to 580.5 million, a difference of \$56.3 million.

A difference of \$56.3 million, Mr. Minister, and that difference of \$56.3 million had to be made up by raising

the taxes at the local level — property taxes. It says:

The per pupil recognized amount would have to be increased by 11.5 per cent in order for recognized expenditures to equal actual expenditures for the province as a whole.

That is the point, Mr. Minister, that we have been trying to make to you, that the operating grants simply have not kept up with inflation and in fact the school boards have lost about 11.5 per cent. The actual expenditures are considerably higher than the recognized expenditures.

Now they say:

A different way of stating the foregoing is that, on average, school divisions have decided they need to spend 11.5 per cent in excess of the per pupil amounts recognized in the foundation formula in order to provide the level and quality of educational programs and services they believe are required. The implications for spending that additional amount are quite different for school divisions with a small tax base compared with a school division with a large tax base.

And then they go on to say, and I want to read one last paragraph from here:

The commission has concluded (the commission has concluded) that the shortfall between recognized and actual expenditure represents a serious impairment of the equalization principles underlying the funding of education in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, that is the point that we have been trying to make to you and your response simply has been, no, we have increased our expenditures. And the Minister of Urban Affairs says, well, if the local boards can't be more efficient we can't simply pour money after it. So, Mr. Minister, the commission goes on to say:

The commission believes that the level of recognized expenditures in the foundation formula is too low and ought to be equal to, or at least much closer to, the actual average expenditure level.

Mr. Minister, the point that the commission made was simply this: that the actual expenditures out there is what you should be recognizing. That is what the people expect out there. That is what the people think is needed in order to have quality education, and your recognized expenditures simply are not adequate.

Mr. Minister, with that background, and before you get on your feet, I want to turn to the school operating grants for this year. If you have a look at those school operating grants, Mr. Minister, you will see that there are 47 of 116 school divisions who had decreases, or 41 per cent — 47 out of 116 had decreases, or 41 per cent received actual decreases.

Now if you take the inflation rate and look at those who received less than inflation or/and decreases, then 71 out

of 116 school divisions received decreases, or 61 per cent.

In other words, 41 per cent outrightly received decreases from last year and last year they got a 1 per cent decrease overall. And secondly, this year alone over 71 per cent did not even get the increase in inflation in your operating grants.

Now, Mr. Minister, that has been borne out by this commission. What this commission is simply saying is that the provincial funding under the foundation formula has not kept up with the actual expenditures that are needed out there. And what you have done is simply shifted the responsibility from the provincial government to the local government.

The only recourse they have, of course, is to increase taxes. Not only that, Mr. Minister, what you did since 1982 — your government — is you have cancelled the \$80 million that used to go out for property improvement grants which were meant for offsetting, I believe if I'm correct, 25 mills. It kept, I think, about 25 mills to offset that.

What I indicated to you the other day, Mr. Minister, is that the funding for education had decreased significantly since 1982. And I think the commission — and that is not me speaking, that is Ray Clayton and his group speaking, saying that you ought to increase significantly. So what did you do last year? You cut all operating grants by 1 per cent. What did you do this year? You gave them a 2.1 per cent increase. So over two years, Mr. Minister, if numeracy is right again, 2.1 subtract a minus and you end up with a plus 1.1 over two years — plus 1.1 over two years increase.

(2100)

That is not meeting the requirements as seen by the commission. In fact the actual expenditures and the recognized expenditures — the gap is going to get larger. It won't be 11.1 per cent now; it's going to be considerably larger. And the only recourse that local boards have, as I said to you the other day, is to reduce the program, the quality of the program, cut programs, as they have done, and I've read to you some of them already and I could read to you dozens and dozens more. Or they could dismiss teachers as others have done, and again I could read to you dozens and dozens of school districts who have reduced staff. Or they could combine classes, or they could combine subject areas. In one particular area I remember well, they are now teaching algebra 11 and calculus 12 in a combined class. Now that certainly is not quality education. And those people are objecting and they should be objecting.

Mr. Minister, if you look at your operating grants for this year, a lot of school districts are suffering very badly. What you've done in some of the areas like Saskatoon and Prince Albert, you've simply raised the computational mill rate and you said therefore they are better able to raise more money. Sure, if you raise the computational mill rate, you know, why not raise it four mills? They could even raise more money. And they were complaining . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, the

directors of education and school boards were complaining very vociferously, but again you didn't hear them.

Mr. Minister, I want to go through some of these, and some of these will not be defended by anybody, so I think I'd better have a look at them. Lanigan. Lanigan received a 17.2 per cent decrease this year — 17.2 per cent. Here is another one. Maple Creek, 11.9 percent decrease; Moosomin, 13.25 per cent decrease. Let's go through some of the others here. I'm only picking out the big ones. Here's another one, Pilot . . . oh, Big Butte, 15.56 per cent decrease.

An Hon. Member: — Are there any increases?

Mr. Rolfes: — Yes, there are some increases obviously. If 41 per cent receive decreases, my math tells me that 59 per cent received an increase. They didn't do that in your math, I know, but we will pick that up in the new core curriculum.

Mr. Minister, here's another one, Mathieu, 10.71 per cent decrease. Now here's one, and I . . . St. Olivier, I believe that's what it is. Is it Olivier? They received a 27.14 per cent increase. I'd like to know why that dramatic change. Here's another one received a 28 per cent increase, St. Alphonse. Why these substantial increase, 28 per cent increase?

Here's another decrease, Wolseley, 12.17 per cent decrease. Here's one, Yorkton public . . . And by the way, at a meeting the other day that I was at, there happened to be member from Yorkton. He wanted to know why they received such a tremendous reduction in the operating grants, and I said, really I don't know, but I would ask the minister in estimates and I would send him a copy of Hansard so that he would know.

Mr. Minister, I'm asking you now specifically to tell me why Yorkton public received a 23.39 per cent decrease this year — a \$551,938. Why?

There have been some other increases, but I will not go through those.

Mr. Minister, those have been dramatic decreases for some school boards, and over all, Mr. Minister, the increase in the operating grants this year have only been 2.1 per cent. Now surely, Mr. Minister, you can't justify that. How can you justify that to school boards when your own commission in 1986 stated that they recognize expenditures and the actual expenditures, the gap ought to be closed. This isn't going to close it.

Last year, minus one; this year, 2.1 per cent increase. That means that the heavy burden for education is going to have to be shifted, and in some instances, as I've already indicated the other day, Saskatoon public, from about 49 per cent a few years ago to now 33.9 per cent. I think Regina is down to about 35 or 36 per cent. And even, I'm sure that you're well familiar with the chairman of the Regina Public School Board, Ray Matheson, who was very critical, and he is saying, hey, look it, we have no other choice. Either we decrease the number of teachers, or we decrease the quality of education, which we don't

want to do, or we have to increase property tax. And that's what they did — they increased the property tax. And then, your colleague, the Minister of Urban Affairs, has the audacity to criticize the Regina Public School Board and separate school boards for increasing the property tax when the operating grants for those school districts simply don't keep up with inflation.

Mr. Minister, there are a number of other areas, other school districts that have not received, over the last number of years, the rate of inflation. They haven't seen their operating grants increase. Mr. Minister, I think it's incumbent upon you to use your influence with your government. I notice, Mr. Minister, you said the other day: but everything, since 1982, things just haven't gone well; you know, our resources are down, our oil prices are down. Well I want to remind the minister that in 1982, a barrel of oil was 28.52 cents a barrel; 1983, \$26.19; 1984, \$25.88; in 1985, \$30 a barrel. It's only in 1986 and '87 that the price of oil has gone down. The price of oil was the highest it had ever been from 1982 to 1985. You should have received a lot more revenues from the resource industries, which you didn't. You gave them huge breaks, and in our estimation, lost about \$1.7 billions. Your priorities simply weren't right, and what has happened is that school boards and people at the local level are the ones that had to bear the brunt of the mistaken policies of your government.

Mr. Minister, even if you take into consideration ordinary expenditures and capital expenditures, you are still short about 10.6 per cent over the last four years when you add the cost of inflation. Inflation was about 23.6 per cent; your increases, I believe, were about 13-point-some per cent. So add in your capital and your operating, you are still short. I know you're going to add in the EDF and you're going to add in all the other expenditures, but that isn't going to really help the taxpayer out there.

Mr. Minister, I wonder if you even had a look at the commission report and noted some of the concerns that they expressed and what we can expect, or what school boards can expect in next year's budget so that the shift from the provincial to the local taxpayer will be reversed. And that, Mr. Minister, will mean a significant increase in expenditures and operating grants to local school boards.

Mr. Minister, with those words I will give you an opportunity to respond, and I think some of my other colleagues would like to get in on this debate, thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well the hon. member has covered a significant amount of territory over the last few minutes and raised some questions relative to some specific school systems about why they would get such large increases, or in his mind, in some instances, decreases. And there was a couple, the St. Olivier, I think it was — do we have the information on that one, as to why it had a 27 per cent increase.

Maybe my officials, if they can find that, I'll answer that one while I'm on my feet as well. There's two issues here and the Local Government Finance Commission report is

not dealing with the level of funding — and now the member is preoccupied, but I'd like him to hear this — they're dealing with the equalization formula. There's the two issues: (a) the level of funding, which you and I can debate; and the second issue is how you distribute the equalization formula.

With all due deference to the hon. member, I honestly don't think you understand how the equalization formula works. And I say that based on your comments when you talked about, we can raise the computational mill rate and that will somehow allow the boards to raise more revenue. It's got nothing to do with that. All that does is deal with how we distribute the pie. Whether the computational mill rate is up here or down here, doesn't affect how much revenue the board collects based on the mill rate that they've set. And if you would like — and I say this not facetiously or invidiously — if you would like, I'm quite prepared to make some time available for you with my officials to go through that very complex formula in some detail because the . . .

An Hon. Member: — By raising it in certain school districts, they get less operating grants.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — It's exactly that. It's an equalization formula.

And the two major things that impact on how much money a local school board will get from the provincial treasury is based on how much assessment can they themselves collect money on; and secondly, how many students do they have to teach. If your students were to double in any given year, just by that alone, never mind where the grant percentage was, they would probably show a substantial increase because of that. Similarly, if their assessment went way up, which meant that they were richer, if you like, then we would take and give less to them and more to some other area. And I went through that the other day, Mr. Chairman.

If one looks at all the examples that he rattled through, Lanigan, Meadow Lake, Moosomin, Humboldt, both public and high, Prince Albert, Prince Albert separate . . .

An Hon. Member: — I didn't mean those at all.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well some of them you mentioned, certainly.

An Hon. Member: — Not Prince Albert. I didn't mention . . .

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well I'll take away Prince Albert then if you don't want to hear the whole story. If one looks at those school boards to try and account for why their grant may have gone down, if we assume that somehow it's not because of the pupils — although that's part of it — the question that you have to ask if you, indeed, want to get an honest representation of the whole story is: did, in those school boards, their assessments rise? That's the question.

In Humboldt, what do we see? We see that the assessment went up over one and a half million in the public and over 1.2 million in the separate — 6 and 5.88 per cent

increases there.

So you can talk about somehow the government grant didn't keep up with inflation, but why would you not talk about how their assessment base rose far higher and far faster than inflation? Could the hon. member explain that to the Assembly in he, in fact, wants to give a full and honest representation.

If he's not happy with that one, what about the 4.56 per cent increase in the assessment base for Last Mountain? Or what about the 2.22 per cent increase for Meadow Lake, or the 4.22 per cent increase for Moosomin, which is one of the ones he raised?

Now either the hon. member believes in the equalization formula or he does not. And also you should know that raising the computational mill rate really is addressing a question of fairness, because who you are penalizing by keeping the computational mill rate lower than the actual? you are penalizing the less well off school boards, the school boards with a lower assessment base.

Or conversely, you are indirectly rewarding — and I hesitate to use that word, but you are indirectly rewarding those who have a very rich assessment base like the Reginas of the world.

The hon. member must not, if he wants to give honest representation of the granting structure and its distribution, he must not ignore the two major components of that formula, assessments locally and number of pupils. Because he talks about inflation, and the other day — and I know you meant this not to be a dishonest representation; I know that because you're an honest person — but the other day in these estimates, and I quote, you said:

Mr. Minister, as I pointed out the other day, your operating grants have increased about 12.5 per cent over the last six years. That's an average of 2.1 per cent when inflation actually was over, I think, over 5 per cent, or 4.9 to 5 per cent, maybe a little higher.

Well I had my officials do some research on that and what did they find? And I know that you didn't mean for this to be dishonest representation, but what did they find? In 1981-82, the operating grants, and these are blue book numbers, was 258 million 600 — I'll round the numbers off, okay? — \$258 million approximately. In 1987-88 it was \$329.736 million.

(2115)

Now the hon. member went through his computations and came up with the twelve and one-half per cent. But what he failed to acknowledge, Mr. Chairman, is that in '85-86 we pulled the long-term debt dollars out and put it in a separate budget line. If we had done the same for the numbers, if you want to truly and accurately compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges, he would have had to pull the long-term debt numbers out of his starting point to get a fair comparison. And it would suggest that in '81-82, if in '85-86 the long-term debt was 56 million, I would suggest that in '81-82 it was probably what? 45-50

million.

Well, what do you get, Mr. Chairman, if you compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges? If it's acceptable to not have the long-term debt in the '81-82 numbers and we pulled out of the '87-88 numbers the 62.7 million, then what do you come up with? Do you come up with twelve and one-half per cent if you want to do this fairly and honestly, Mr. Chairman? No, what you come up with is a 51.7 per cent increase and that's on the operating grants without long-term debt in, and that's not with the education development fund in it; it's not with the capital grants in it.

So what I'm saying to the hon. member is, I know politically you have to be seen to be making the case that this big, bad, rotten Tory government doesn't care about education. The reality is we do care about education. Our commitment has been there consistently through good times and, I might add, Mr. Chairman, through bad. Even when wheat went to \$2.50 a bushel; when potash was selling for half what it was in the halcyon days of the '70s; when oil was selling for \$8 a barrel as opposed for \$40 a barrel; when uranium prices have plummeted . . .

An Hon. Member: — Not true.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, the hon. member tries to suggest that the resource revenue in this province is somehow fine, when everybody out there knows that that is not the case.

Now if he wants to live in wonderland or the world of make believe, he can, but every farmers out there knows that the world wheat market is a third of what it was ten years ago. Everyone knows that except perhaps for the NDP. Now I'm saying to you that our commitment has been there 51.7 per cent on that operating grant. And I'll tell you what, Mr. Chairman, we're proud of that commitment, and you're going to see more of the same in the future.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Minister, facts don't seem to mean a thing to you. Mr. Minister, I have here the actual price of a barrel of oil in U.S. dollars — they're right here. From 1982 on, there wasn't one year where oil was at \$8 a barrel. The lowest it was was February 20, 1986, at 13.6 dollars a barrel; that was the average price for that year. Never, never in the history of this province has oil been at \$40 a barrel; the highest it was was in 1981 at 31.77.

But, Mr. Minister, when you take the average from 1971 to 1981, the price of a barrel of oil was \$10.47 a barrel — through the 10 years that we were the government, \$10.47 a barrel.

From 1982 to 1985, the price of a barrel of oil was \$27 and, I believe, 50-some cents — in three of those four years, 27 and a half dollars a barrel.

Now, Mr. Minister, it is not our fault that the former minister, Colin Thatcher, one of the first things he did was reduce the royalties to the oil companies, and you people lost about \$1.7 billion. But don't ask the people at the local level to have their taxes increased because it was your policy to give the money away from the resources.

You should have had another \$1.7 billion which you could have used for education, which you could have used for health, but you didn't — you didn't.

Mr. Minister, this report clearly indicates that the recognized expenditures are simply too low for the actual expenditures. And Ray Clayton's committee clearly indicates and says to you, look, the recognized expenditures must increase dramatically, and he said at that time, 11.5 per cent — 11.5 per cent they should have been increased at that time.

And I said to you before, the gap now between recognized expenditures and actual expenditures has, instead of narrowing, has widened even further.

And consequently, consequently, Mr. Minister, you have shifted the burden of education on the property taxes, on the property taxpayers. And they're simply saying, look, we've had enough, we can't afford this any longer. You've got lots of money for other things — lots of money.

An Hon. Member: — Call an election.

Mr. Rolfes: — Oh, I'd love to see you call an election. The Deputy Premier says, call an election. Well he and the Premier are the only ones that can decide that. The people out there would love to have an election right now. They were conned once; I don't think they'll be conned again — actually they were conned twice.

Mr. Minister, are you going to address the problem as recognized by the Clayton commission that your operating grants simply have not . . . your operating grants have simply not kept up with the need that is out here — those aren't my words; those are the words of the commission — and you simply haven't met those demands.

I'm asking you again: will you address the problem in the upcoming budget next year so that the people out there will say, look, we cannot accept any more of the shift from provincial to the local levels?

And, Mr. Minister, the other question I did ask you is: would you please answer as to why the operating grants for Yorkton had gone down a whopping 23-point-some per cent? I want that on the record.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member asks for a commitment. I've already given the commitment that we stand four-square behind education and will continue to do so.

I would throw this out to the hon. member in that he, presuming that he and I both continue in these roles, I would make available to you my officials because I think — and I say this sincerely; I'm trying to be fair to you — I don't think you understand how the formula works; I don't think you understand the relationship between the computational mill rate and what it really does and what it really means.

An Hon. Member: — Neither did Clayton.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — In fact, by raising it — I'm saying

you don't understand it. I don't criticize you for that because it is very complicated, and I didn't pretend to understand it. Because what the local government commission is raising there is not the question of level of funding and the ratio; what they're raising is the whole question of the distribution . . .

An Hon. Member: — Did you read it?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Yes, I've read that particular section, and I stand to be corrected.

What this points out, Mr. Deputy Chairman, is this: when we were in estimates last week, we got into this whole question of whether the government is providing adequate funding or whether we're somehow off-loading our responsibilities on the local jurisdictions. At that time, the hon. member raised issues like inflation, and today, and then; I've shown him and our colleagues in the legislature here that we've met inflation at every turn; 60 per cent — or comparing apples to apples and oranges to oranges, on the operating grants alone, 51.7, per cent when we know inflation was probably 40 per cent in that time frame.

So we destroyed his inflation bogymen. Then we destroyed the notion that somehow the ratio of provincial local funding — that percentage is somehow out of whack over this last ten years, when in fact since our government, our party took power, it has varied by maybe 1 or 2 per cent at the most — 51, 52 per cent.

So we destroyed that argument. Then we even used a couple others that he hadn't thought of. We went through the fact that mill rates increased much more dramatically under the so-called halcyon days of the NDP, and if we had been off-loading, the mill rate should have increased during our term of administration. But '87, zero was the average change in mill rates; the year before that it was 0.25; 1985 was zero. We had one year, granted, five and a half. So the argument that somehow mill rates had to go up dramatically to offset the fact that the provincial government was sneaking out of its commitment — we destroyed that bogymen.

Then knowing all those arguments were fallacious and that we had selectively and systematically shot every one of them down, Mr. Deputy Chairman, what does he raise today? Well what he did is he went back with his researchers . . . Actually, probably it was the other way around: his researchers probably came to him and said, look, you got hurt bad with your faulty logic; we got to find something else here. So what they did is they went and dug up the Local Government Finance Commission report. This is the new straw man. And now he's trying to say somehow, by increasing the computational mill rate, it changed the revenue that the boards themselves will bring in. Well that's not the reality. It talks to the . . .

An Hon. Member: — I didn't say that.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Yes, you did, and it speaks directly to the point of fairness, and unless I hear some more support for changing the formula, the equalization formula that you use and we use has been pretty fair.

But I touched a nerve when I talked about how resource revenues has declined, and yet even through that decline in resource revenues our commitment had been there to education . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The hon. member says it's a falsehood. Well, let's look at his version of a falsehood.

He says what we should do, and his friend the salt-water sheikh from Shaunavon says, let's go back to the energy policy — the good old NDP energy policy. Well, what was that? That was the Liberal-NDP coalition, Mr. Deputy Chairman, They were the ones that ganged up on Alberta and Saskatchewan and virtually shut our oil patch in. You see, he talks about the price per barrel, Mr. Chairman. You see, he talks about who enjoyed the highest price per barrel, but I ask you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, does it matter at all what the price of oil is or what the royalties are if there is not one barrel being pumped out of the ground? Well of course it doesn't. You could have oil . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And there's the hon. member for Regina North East who's got an upgrader being built in his constituency and yet he will consistently stand in this legislature and say oh, those big, bad oil companies; how rotten they are.

I ask the hon. member from Regina North East — I challenge the hon. member from Regina North East — to go and find out how much education taxes that Co-op upgrader pays. I challenge him. I challenge him. I challenge him to go and find out what that complex pays in taxes and what the share is for education. I'll bet you it is one handsome sum, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

An Hon. Member: — How much?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I don't know. I don't know. I asked my officials to see if we could get that number. They were unable to come up with it on short notice, but I would sure enjoy knowing.

You see, the hon. members opposite think that if you put your royalties high enough that somehow you're doing a great public service. Well, I'll tell you, all that did in my riding and in the member's riding from Souris-Cannington, the member from Rosetown, the member from Maple Creek, the member from Swift Current, the member from Kindersley, Lloydminster — the list goes on and on, Mr. Chairman — I'll tell you what the NDP-Liberal coalition did in my riding. This policy that he thinks is so great and that was so useful to our school system, you know what it did in my riding, Mr. Deputy Chairman? It virtually shut the oil patch in.

And it wouldn't have mattered whether royalties were at 92 per cent and oil was at \$110 a barrel, there wasn't a cent of revenue to be had because they squeezed the life out of the oil patch. They shut those wells down. They shut the jobs down.

And you know what else they did, Mr. Deputy Chairman, they shut Main Street Weyburn down. Hotels were boarded up in my town because of their policy. There was marches on this legislature from my oil patch buddies who worked on the same lane as I did in Weyburn, that said, that decreed, that pleaded for these people to come to their senses when it came to resource policy. They did

not, Mr. Chairman, and they were defeated. This government came in, and we've never seen oil patch activity like we've never since this government came into being, Mr. Chairman.

And I'll tell you who it's good for. I forget the numbers. I used them the other day, and I'm assuming I'm reasonably correct, although I am working from memory. You see, the school boards in my area, Mr. Chairman, they kind of like having oil wells around. I'll tell you why. Because for every oil well, the school boards get the same revenue as they get from five quarters of land. So if you have lots of oil wells, that means the oil companies, not just the farmer, share in the bills.

(2130)

And so what that means, Mr. Chairman, you can raise more revenue and have the farmers pay less tax. Now they like that, Mr. Chairman. They like that those big, bad oil companies are putting oil wells in there, and batteries, because they pay tax on them. The local R.M. likes them, the school board likes them and the people like them because their children get jobs there working on the oil patch. They build a lot of good roads.

So we in the government and the socialists opposite will for ever be at opposite ends of the political spectrum on this debate. And, Mr. Chairman, quite frankly, the oil patch workers in my riding get a little tired of being booted around as some kind of bad guys, because in my town they are decent citizens. It's their children that are being educated in our schools, and they, Mr. Chairman, see themselves as making a very fair and full contribution to the economic and social well-being of our communities. They don't see themselves as being hoodlums like the hon. members would always want to paint them.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to begin by congratulating my colleague, the member from Saskatoon South. He obviously struck a nerve, which tells us one thing: that what the member was bringing forward here makes a lot of sense, otherwise the minister would not have had to react in the way that he has just reacted.

Now by totally getting into the pumping of oil and the amount of revenues, which is quite relevant except for what the minister is saying, now, Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the minister in the process of making my remarks, when he says that there is all this oil activity out there, all this oil that's being pumped, I simply ask him to consider: what's the purpose of it all if the people of Saskatchewan are not getting any benefit?

The thing that he loses sight of is that if you pump that oil, it's only once you can pump it, you get rid of it; and if you don't get any revenue today, you're sure not going to get it tomorrow. And that's where this government has failed. This government has given away this oil, has given the royalty holidays to the oil companies, have given away almost \$2 billion of revenues that should have went into the provincial treasury, and some of it should have went into school grants, and we are never going to be able to get it again. But he doesn't recognize that.

Now the minister talks about school boards in his constituencies are glad to have oil wells. Well I don't doubt that at all, but once again this minister, as this government, fails to recognize what the role of government is. Surely if there is oil being drilled in Weyburn or southern Saskatchewan, there should accrue to the school board in Hudson Bay, or the school board where there are no oil wells, or the school division in Sturgis or the school division in Humboldt where there are no oil wells. If you give this oil away without charging the right rent for it, those are the people that pay the price, and therefore have had their property taxes going up.

It just doesn't make any logical sense at all when you listen to the argument that the minister has been making. There is a role of government, and that is to make sure that the wealth of this province is distributed equitably throughout all of the province and not simply benefitting only those where the wealth may be generated in some particular local area. And even the people in those local areas would not argue against that. They haven't in the past, and I'm sure that they wouldn't argue that now.

I want to just make a comment here, and ask some questions of the minister about something very specific. The minister talked about the fact that there have been something like 51 per cent increases in school operating grants in the term of this government. Well I'm wondering: if that's the case, what happened in the city of Regina? And here is the case in the city of Regina, where this year property taxes are going up on the average of \$37 a home — that's \$37 this year. There was an increase last year, and I believe there was an increase the year before. And in 1985-1986 there was \$241, on top of the mill rate increase, that came about on the property tax . . . property owner because this government did away with the education grant . . . education tax rebate. A massive shift of taxes from the provincial level and the cost of education from the provincial level to the property owner.

A very deliberate policy: give oil companies a royalty holiday of almost \$2 billion, and shift that tax load to the property owner who's struggling out there to make a living, who's not sure if he is going to have a job tomorrow. And here is the specific point: in the city of Regina, in the Roman Catholic School Division No. 81, the operating grant for 1985-1986 was \$13,661,000. That was the actual operating grant. I ask you, Mr. Chairman: did you know that in 1988-1989, this budget that we're considering, the operating grant in the city of Regina public school system is going to be only \$12,610,000 — a reduction of \$1 million between 1985 and 1988?

That's a major shift. That's doesn't even take into consideration the increase in costs that the school division has had to incur because of inflation and because of increased costs in all aspects of its operating.

Now the public school division has not been left alone. In the public school system in Regina, division no. 4, in 1985-1986 the operating actual grant was 26,608,000; in 1988-1989, some four years later, it's only \$26,121,000 — a reduction of \$500,000.

Now, Mr. Minister, how in Heaven's name can you talk about . . . nothing to do with computational mill rate here, nothing to do with your debt reduction here, because I'm not using the years that you spoke about. How do you justify to a — let's just stay with the Catholic school system where the enrolment has gone up, where the costs have gone up, where the inflation this year is 5.4 per cent, and in previous years sometimes higher — how do you justify between '85 and '86 and '88-89 a cut in the operating grant of \$1 million? Will you explain that to the taxpayers of Regina?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Chairman, I think we have here another member — and I don't criticize because it is very complex — who does not understand the equalization formula.

He started out his remarks about how school boards probably do like having oil wells because it does add to their assessment base. But then he went on to argue that if municipalities and/or school boards will have access to that tax base, that have those oil wells, well that's all fine and well for them to have oil wells or any other economic development that they might have that's unique to them. But he said, but how does that help the Hudson Bays of the world?

To use but one example he used, he said, you know, how does this broadening and increasing and diversifying economic base in a Weyburn, for example, help a Hudson Bay? Well, of course, that's exactly why you have a equalization formula. If Weyburn — to use that as an example — has a broadening and ever-growing assessment base, hence their need is less than, for example, to use your example of Hudson Bay, then the formula reflects that, and less will come from the provincial coffers for Weyburn, and more would go to Hudson Bay. But you see, Mr. Chairman, here's where his logic fell apart. He then immediately went into the Regina separate school board. Is the hon. member listening?

On the one hand you said, on the one hand you said oil wells are good for them that have them; economic development is good for those that have it. But what about, to use your example, Hudson Bay? And of course the formula would adjust. But then he immediately turned his logic around and said, what about Regina separate? Okay. Now there is a board, Mr. Chairman. I asked the question, they don't maybe have oil wells; they might have an upgrade to draw on, but do they have oil wells? No. But do they have a broadening and ever-increasing assessment base like an area that has oil wells for example? And the answer is yes.

In fact, I don't think the hon. member is going to like to hear this: if you compare their assessment base in '81 to '87, did it go up by 20 or 30 or 40 per cent like inflation did, Mr. Chairman? The answer is no. This could be one of the highest examples in the province. Their assessment base increased between '81 and '87 — 66 per cent. Now if the hon. member's logic in the first example is right where he said, you know, those communities that have access to oil wells and a broadening and expanding

assessment base, they ought to be expected to take a little because the Hudson Bays of the world are the ones that would need it, to use his example, Mr. Chairman.

And that's exactly what we see there. If their share of the provincial grant went down, it's because they had this 66 per cent increase in their assessment base. Is he saying that we should ignore the equalization formula, ignore the Hudson Bays of the world, to use his own example? You can't have it both, you can't have it both ways, Mr. Chairman. But then he said, well, oh yes, but their enrolments are way up. Well, what are the numbers on enrolment? Is there a 66 per cent increase in the enrolment? Is there a 30 per cent increase in the enrolment? You know what the answer is, Mr. Chairman? A 1.2 per cent increase in the enrolment.

And the grants, Mr. Chairman . . . a 1.2 per cent increase in enrolment, 120 more pupils in '87 over '81, and their grant, the provincial grant, went up 22 per cent.

An Hon. Member: — For whom?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — For the Regina separate.

An Hon. Member: — Between when?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — '81 and '87.

An Hon. Member: — What happened to '85 to '88?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well you see, he doesn't understand the formula. Their assessment went up, their pupils basically stayed level, but even in the face of that, the provincial government was putting more money in every year.

Now did the percentage change, what they raised locally versus what they got from the government? You bet. That's called fairness. If another community's assessment had gone up by 66 per cent, well surely he wouldn't have wanted that grant to go up when the fairness question would have precluded an assessment who had gone down from not getting more.

So you see the hon. member cannot have it both ways, Mr. Chairman. There has been a dramatic increase in assessment. We went through that bogeyman last time, and . . . I'm tempted to get into the argument about the oil again, because what the hon. member says is that somehow the PCS aren't getting fair economic rent.

Now there are a number of models for economic rent. We've employed one; they employed one, another one. And what he's trying to make a point of, is that somehow our revenue is less, or that what we net out as a society is less with our model than it is with theirs.

But what do they consistently not acknowledge, Mr. Chairman?

An Hon. Member: — Jobs.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — My colleague from Swift Current says, jobs. You see, the socialist notion goes this way, Mr. Chairman.

An Hon. Member: — Well tell us.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — And the hon. member from Fairview says, tell us. Well you see, their logic was this, Mr. Chairman, when it came to resource policy, energy policy in particular. They said, well, we'd like to extract a very high rent if we can. And what they did, essentially, they overshot the mark a little. Even today, Saskatchewan is higher than both Manitoba and Alberta, okay?

We're extracting more, much to the dismay of the oil companies and our sister provinces. But they extracted so much that they shut the oil patch down, essentially. And what that means, Mr. Chairman, is the 15,000 direct and indirect jobs were shut down too — and these are, for the most part, very good jobs, good paying jobs. But you see they never factor that into their numbers, Mr. Chairman.

(2145)

They were quite happy to have, I don't know how many thousand oil patch workers on welfare and on unemployment insurance. But that is the socialists' way. That is the socialist way. They like to have people on welfare and on unemployment insurance. And I'll tell you why, Mr. Chairman, because they like to have them subservient to the state. They like to see people come crawling to the government for the dole on a weekly basis. They can laugh if they like, Mr. Chairman, but that is the truth. That is the socialist way. The more people that you have subservient to the state — you see that's their measure of success. The number of people that you've got on the dole is how they measure success, Mr. Chairman. These people wanted to be productive citizens. And I'll tell you, under the policies of the member from Swift Current, we've probably got 10 to 15,000 direct and indirect jobs in that oil patch today, Mr. Chairman.

The hon. member made an additional point. He said, you know, we'd be better to leave this oil in the ground than to give it away. At least, according to him, that we're somehow giving it away.

And I just want to relate a little story, Mr. Chairman. You know, when I became Minister of Energy and Mines, I was confronted with a couple of facts. The first one was . . . the first one was this: that we were buying about 65 per cent of all our natural gas, another form of energy, natural gas from Alberta. The gas that goes into your farm, Mr. Chairman, or into my house, or the Minister of Highways' house, two-thirds of that gas, in 1982, was coming from Alberta. We were buying it from Alberta.

We drilled, I think . . . In 1982 there was 9 gas wells drilled in this entire province, Mr. Chairman. What we were doing is we were buying this gas from Alberta. And that's okay if they've got gas and we can buy it, that's fine. But in buying it from Alberta, what else were we doing? I wonder, Mr. Minister, or Madam Minister of Energy, I wonder how many hundreds of millions of dollars we paid in royalties to Alberta over the years when we bought natural gas from them. I wonder how many times we could have run the school system in this province with the dollars we spent that we sent to Alberta in royalties. I'll bet you it was, what? maybe a couple hundred million

dollars over the course of time, which is the same as the . . . it's the same as the budget, almost, when we took over in Education. I wonder how many hundreds of millions of dollars. Well that was . . .

An Hon. Member: — What about the jobs we exported?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — And the jobs that were exported, all the drilling was done over there.

So when I became Minister of Energy, I saw this unusual fact: 65 per cent of our gas is bought from Alberta. But you know, in Energy and Mines, Mr. Chairman, they have this map of the province, a geophysical map or some fancy term like that, and what this map shows is — they colour code it, they colour code the map of Saskatchewan. And where there are natural gas reserves, it's, I think, in green; and where there's uranium reserves, it's in red; and where there's oil, it's another colour, and so on and so forth.

And if you take the map of Saskatchewan and you put it next to the map of Alberta, Mr. Chairman, do you know what you find? You find that where the border is, you would see that on the Albert side of the border there would be all kinds of green, which meant natural gas reserves. And then there would be the border, and then you would see virtually no green. So the NDP, Mr. Chairman, assumed that somehow that border must have went 20,000 feet into the ground and that the gas on the Alberta side couldn't possibly have crept into the Saskatchewan side. Well what convoluted logic!

Well you know, Mr. Chairman, what do we find out now? How many gas wells do we think will be drilled this year? Eight hundred, somebody says, maybe 1,200 gas wells this year. Well you know what that proves, Mr. Chairman? The border doesn't go 20,000 feet into the ground.

There's gas on both sides. And do Saskatchewan people win? Oh, the hon. member from Regina Centre says, you want to give it away. I mean, that's the classic socialist response. It was okay to give maybe, what, \$200 million away to the Alberta government in royalties, plus the jobs, plus the indirect spin-off. That's okay, Mr. Chairman, but it's not okay to have security of gas supply for natural gas for Saskatchewan consumers. It's not okay to have deregulated environment that means lower gas costs. It's not okay to have our people busy drilling 1,200 wells. Somehow that doesn't count because they're not subservient to the state. And you know what else doesn't count? Compare the revenues from natural gas in '81-82 to the revenues in this blue book, and you'll find there's a handsome return in royalties to this government, not the Alberta government.

So I say, Mr. Chairman, it doesn't matter whether you're talking oil or natural gas or uranium, Saskatchewan is an energy supermarket, and we're going to develop those resources for our children and their children's children and for our future. That policy has proved to be very wise for this generation and will be for subsequent generations. And it's a course that we will continue because, Mr. Chairman, it is those royalties, it is that economic benefit, it is those taxes which pay the bills in education. That's the economic wealth that we're going

to continue to capitalize on for this important area of our society, Mr. Chairman, and that's educating our children for the future.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, I want to . . . I'm glad that the excitable minister talked about models because I want to compare some models and I want to compare the model that was used prior to 1982 and the model that has been used since.

The model prior to 1982, Mr. Chairman, even though the minister talks about oil wells being shut down, somehow had an opportunity for the government of that day to balance all our budgets. The minister's model that he talks about, which has been implemented by his former colleague, Mr. Colin Thatcher, back in 1982, somehow has resulted, in spite of this imaginary activity out there, in the massive deficits where we now are burdened with something like \$370 million a year in interest on the public debt because these guys gave away all that revenue to the oil companies in tax holidays.

I'm prepared to compare our model, which brought in balanced budgets and operating grants to school boards which were realistic, to his model, which had brought about massive deficit accumulated astronomically, and school board grants which have seen reductions in Regina to both school systems between 1985 and 1986, in spite of the fact that their costs have gone up dramatically.

Now I want to talk about another model. The minister says that his model is important because it creates all these jobs. He uses the job model. Well I ask the minister, if he would be so good as to listen, if that model is so effective, if it has worked so well, why has there been, between 1982 and 1988, an increase of something like 7,000 family households who are recipients of welfare — an increase of 7,000 because there aren't enough jobs for those people? These are families. Why has the total number of people dependent on welfare increased, in round figures, from 20,000 to 40,000 between 1982 and 1988 if that is such a great model that has created all these jobs?

The minister says their policy is right because it's a job-creation policy. Where are those jobs? Keeping in mind that we have had in the last two years a massive out-migration of people from Saskatchewan, one would think that with that fact and with the fact that this model that he talks about, we should be so effective we should not have an increase in the number of people on the welfare rolls from 20,000 to 40,000, and we should not have had our unemployment rate increase from around 4 per cent to 7.8 per cent in that period of time.

That model that the minister talks about is a failure. It's a failure in every sense of the word. If all that so-called activity is so beneficial, what happened to those jobs? Why has the unemployment increased?

Now, Mr. Minister, what is the result? The result is that we're not taking about education. You have had to say to school divisions that you cannot carry your fair share, the provincial share, of the operating costs of our school boards, of our education system, to the extent that in the

Regina public school system, whereas in 1982 the province picked up 43 per cent of the operating budget and it also provided a property improvement grant which brought that up substantially even higher, now in 1987 — and I don't have the right figure yet for 1988 — that percentage of operating budget picked up by the provincial government had dropped to 37 per cent.

Now that's got nothing to do with computational mill rate; that's got nothing to do with assessments, Mr. Minister. The facts are clear and straightforward and simple. Your proportion of operating grants covered provincially in '82 was 43 per cent. They have dropped to 37 per cent, a massive cut in funding to education which has caused an increase in property taxes each and every year since you have been in power.

And I say, and I submit, Mr. Chairman, that that is a very deliberate policy of this government. It has not happened by accident. It's been a policy in which this government has decided that they're going to put more of the cost of education on property taxes, and less on the provincial government, which is better able to distribute the wealth of this province and pay for the education our children need.

The result, Mr. Chairman, why? Because they chose their priorities — the corporate sector and, in this case, the oil corporations to whom they have given tax holidays, royalty holidays — and instead shifted that expense on property tax owners, bringing our property taxes in this province among the highest in Canada.

Now, Mr. Minister, you don't need to answer this today if you don't have the time, but you should think about why there has been a reduction in the provincial share of operating grants to the public school system in Regina from 43 per cent in 1982 to 37 per cent in 1987.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I'll just go through this quickly again. The hon. member obviously didn't hear last time. He talks about how the percentage had changed from '81 to '87. The provincial share went down, Mr. Chairman, and that's for good reason because during that same time the assessment in Regina separate went up 66 per cent. So if you want to give to those who need the most or have a lesser ability to raise, than you take, if you like, from Regina separate and you give to Northern Lights, Assiniboia, North Battleford, to give you but three examples of who gained by an equalization formula during that same period, Mr. Chairman.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 9:59 p.m.