

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to all members of the Assembly, 46 grade 12 students from Peacock High School in Moose Jaw. They are accompanied today, Mr. Speaker, by their social studies instructor Gary Loutzenhiser, and the school principal Ray Boughen.

Following question period today, Mr. Speaker we'll be meeting for pictures and drinks and discussion of the proceedings of the Assembly, and then at 3 o'clock they'll be taking a tour of the building.

I would ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming these students and wishing them well in achieving their endeavours when they graduate this spring.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Martin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure on behalf of my colleague, the member from Mayfair, to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the House, 45 students sitting in the west gallery, from the Christian Centre Academy in Saskatoon. They are grade 6 and grade 7. Their teacher is Joan Terekoff; the chaperons are Faith Neudorf, Mrs. Colleen Fair, and the bus driver is Duff Friesson.

I'll have the pleasure to meet with them at 3 o'clock on behalf of the member from Mayfair, Mr. Speaker, and I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming these students from the Christian Academy in Saskatoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to this Assembly, and through you today in your gallery, 19 grade 4 students from Miller School in Melville, Saskatchewan, with their principal Ted Starchuck, and their teacher aide Brenda Molnar, and their bus driver Don Hanishewsky.

I'll be meeting with them at 2:30, and it says here that we'll be meeting outside on the front lawn. I only ask that we pick the shady side today; it is rather hot out. But I will be meeting with them for pictures at 2:30.

I know they've already have had a tour of the building. I hope they have had an educational trip to Regina, and I wish them a safe return. I ask all members to welcome these students from Melville.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Lay-off Notices for PCS Workers

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Energy and it pertains to the question of The Potash Resources Act, and in particular the lay-off of 200 workers from Cory and the detrimental impact that that lay-off has on the families and the workers of those people concerned.

Mr. Speaker, in September of 1987 — I have the quotation in front of me — the Minister of Energy said, in discussing The Potash Resources Act, the following quote:

I would also remind the House, (Mr. Chairman,) that this Bill indeed is designed to minimize those job lay-offs because of the market-place. Without the Bill, we would see some possible permanent mine closures, or at least near to permanent.

I just want to repeat those words:

Without the Bill we would see some possible permanent mine closures, or at least near to permanent. (And, Mr. Chairman,) that means massive job lay-offs.

Mr. Speaker, that was the rationale and the justification and the assurance given by this Minister of Energy on behalf of the Premier and that government of the day that The Potash Resources Act and its consequences would not be felt in this way that it has been.

Madam Minister, my question to you is this: what went wrong with those assurances. Were those statements merely made in order to get the legislation through at the time, knowing full well that in fact there would be massive job lay-offs, or is this government demonstrated total and complete incompetence in handling this very important resource?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Speaker, in answer to the Leader of the Opposition question, perhaps one should go back and look at the debate that took place in this House at the time the legislation was introduced. I want to say here and now, Mr. Speaker, that we have been proceeding, in what I believe is a reasonable and responsible fashion, with the preparation of regulations that are necessary under the Act, and the leader will know that.

And of course, secondly to that Act has been the very careful selection of board members. I use the word "careful" because of the very strict conflict of interest guide-lines that are within that Act.

Mr. Speaker, at the time that the legislation was brought into this House, it was stated that it was, number one, because of the supply situation that not only Saskatchewan was facing, but the world. Obviously secondary to that question, Mr. Speaker, was the issue of anti-dumping charges on the Saskatchewan potash industry. We believe that with the legislation being brought in at that time, Mr. Speaker, that in fact it did generate enough confidence that Saskatchewan

producers, all producers, were able to negotiate with the United States government a suspension of the anti-dumping action.

Mr. Speaker, we will be proceeding most likely before the end of the year for the legislation and the board, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question to the Minister of Energy. The Minister of Energy invited the members of the legislature to look at the entire debate last fall on The Potash Resources Act, and that's what I've done — at least not for the entire debate for a good portion of it — and thus the quotation that I gave to you.

My supplementary question, Madam Minister, is this: if the world situation is a situation of over-supply, as this government would have the people of this province believe — the potash workers, the families who are laid off believe — can the minister tell the House why it is that two old, inefficient New Mexico American potash mines are starting up production just at the time that 200 families and workers are being laid off here in Saskatchewan? Isn't it correct that the over-supply situation is not as you say, and that the reality is that the Saskatchewan government is prepared to play the doormat so that the private potash industry in the United States can profit and our workers go unemployed? Isn't that the situation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Speaker, we can't answer for what is happening in New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, we only know that when it come to Saskatchewan production in the potash industry, that in fact there is an oversupply situation. Saskatchewan is a major supplier within the world. We are also the largest exporter, Mr. Speaker.

In answer to the problems that we are having in this province over several years, leading up to the anti-dumping charges against the Saskatchewan potash industry, Mr. Speaker, the legislation was brought in. I would remind the Leader of the Opposition . . .

An Hon. Member: — Absolute nonsense.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Well, the member from Saskatoon says this is nonsense. I would remind them, Mr. Speaker, that without the legislation that took place, in fact there would have been massive lay-offs, with the possibility of permanent closure of some of those mines.

Mr. Speaker, I will go back to what the legislation in fact did for this industry. It allowed them to come to an agreement with the United States industry to drop the anti-dumping charges, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, a new question to the minister. The minister full well knows that the legislation has not yet even been proclaimed, at least to the best of my knowledge, and yet she seeks to give the legislation credit for the question of the anti-dumping suit.

I wonder if the minister would answer this situation; why is it that Saskatchewan potash companies and mines, producing the best potash ore, producing it under the most efficient circumstances, that we have to cut back; but the New Mexico potash mines, fighting with a depleting resource, a very poor potash resource revenue base and resources basis, why is it that those two can open up?

How in the world can it be said, Madam Minister, how can we conclude anything else but that this Government of Saskatchewan is serving the handmaidens of New Mexico and the United States interests, and our own families suffer? Surely you must have a change in policy and not permit that to take place.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Speaker, I do in fact believe that the legislation provided enough confidence within the world industry to allow that agreement to take place between the producers and the U.S. government. And I would challenge the leader to go out and consult and in fact see if indeed that is true.

Mr. Speaker, I can only go back to the issue of supply. While I cannot answer specifically for PCS (Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan) Cory division, I do know that in terms of the supply, there's a white division and a red division, and it is the red division that has been on the over supply. And I think if the leader were to check that out, he would indeed find out that that is true.

Mr. Speaker, even with the legislation and when it is in place, companies will have to make management decisions based on their supply situation, their market situation, and their day-to-day operations. That won't change.

Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I have one last new question for the minister. The hon. minister tries to argue that things are not changing too dramatically, when the hon. minister knows full well that at least for 200 Cory potash workers, and for others, it has changed not only dramatically but tragically, as these people leave the province of Saskatchewan.

What other conclusion can we draw except that The Potash Resources Act, unproclaimed albeit that it is, has not achieved the objectives that you yourself, and your Premier said it would achieve. What other conclusion can those workers and the people of the province of Saskatchewan conclude?

What other conclusion can we make, other than the fact that this government is so mesmerized by the United States and the big business entrepreneurs of the United States and the big potash companies in the United States, it's so mesmerized by these megaprojects that it's prepared to sacrifice our key, basic potash industry, so that an old, run-down, depleted potash business in New Mexico should go. That's a cause for shame; it's a cause for your resignation, Madam Minister, and the Premier's as well.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Speaker, this is ironic, considering what took place during the debate on the legislation before the member from Regina Elphinstone was in this House, and considering the fact that the Leader of the Opposition had a hard time, wondering if he should go with the debate, go against it. I'm not even sure where he was when the vote took place.

Now, Mr. Speaker, he has taken up the challenge of the legislation and the potash industry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. Order, order. I'd like to ask the members to allow the minister to answer. She's been asked the question, and she's answering the question, but it's difficult if she has too much competition.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to remind the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, to take a look at the industry as a whole, in fact, to see what happens, particularly during the summer months in lay-offs.

Indeed it is of concern if these jobs are going to be lost permanently — 200 jobs, 200 families, Mr. Speaker, is a lot to any province, but particularly to this industry it's severe.

I will take you back and remind you when we did the legislation the concern, first of all, was with jobs and families in this province, Mr. Speaker. We've seen many lay-offs and job losses over the past several years due to a cycle that was taking place. We had to deal with it and, Mr. Speaker, we did that. And we will complete the process by the end of this year.

One can only hope, Mr. Speaker, that these jobs in fact are not permanent lay-offs and that in fact they will be back when the supply situation has turned itself around.

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, new question to the minister. Is it not correct, Madam Minister, that during the course of the introduction of The Potash Resources Act that you or your officials, or both, met with the workers and assured them that there would not be any permanent closures? In fact the rationale that you gave them is the rationale that I gave at my very outset of the first question.

And is it also not true that your government, maybe under the Premier's signature, mailed correspondence to those workers assuring them that there would not be permanent closures or massive shut-downs? Is that not true? And if that is true, what in the world is wrong with the government's capacity to forecast if four months later the prediction that it gave in the fall of 1987 is proven to be so wildly off base? Are you people so totally incompetent that you're not able to give an accurate forecast? And are you so totally heartless that you don't care what family or worker gets damaged by this?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Speaker, it is true that we did in fact meet with the workers. We also went to each of the potash communities and met with each of the union representatives, Mr. Speaker. There was a commitment

given that in fact this legislation would not cause massive permanent job lay-offs, Mr. Speaker.

Now the Leader of the Opposition can do as he wants with that statement and twist and turn it, but it doesn't change the truth.

Legislation for a Common Day of Rest

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question to the Minister of Urban Affairs. Mr. Minister, I think it was February you spoke to the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association at the annual convention, and you said to them the following, and I quote you your own words: "The government will be listening closely to what you have to say at this convention."

And so the delegates at SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) took you at your word and they told you a number of things that they wanted you to pay attention to, and they made their position very clear at this convention that they want legislation to provide one common day of rest, provincial legislation that would provide it across all of the province.

My question to you, Mr. Minister, is this: if you did listen, as you told those delegates you would listen, will you assure them now here today that you will have legislation in this House which will assure a common day of rest for the small-business people as well, and in particular for the business people of rural Saskatchewan who are deeply threatened by any legislation which would do what you have been announcing lately.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Speaker, it's true what the member says, we consult quite a bit and have been and continue to consult with SUMA. They clearly understand the legislation that will be introduced in this House shortly regarding the matter of store hours. I believe that for those communities that want to have a common day of rest, if they want to reach that position, they'll be able to reach it.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, if only the minister had some backbone and would actually listen as well as consult.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — And do what's right. Now my new question to the minister, Mr. Speaker, is this: the list, Mr. Minister, is long of those people who say that you should have a common day of rest provincially. It includes cities like Estevan and Weyburn and Prince Albert and others. It includes small independent business people. It includes rural business people who you are abandoning by your proposals. It includes families of working people and employees who are struggling out there because they don't have the protection. It includes church groups and organizations, just to name you a short list of the numbers of people who have said to you, there should be a common day of rest.

Why, I ask you then, do you choose to ignore all of these

people who are so widely representative of the people of Saskatchewan, and instead you support the demands of the large national chains throughout this country whose only intention and desire is to wipe out the competition of the small-business person in this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — I think, Mr. Speaker, the list of consumers, the list of our taxpayers, the list of the people in this province that want the privilege and the opportunity to shop on Sundays is a whole lot longer than that litany that he just went over.

And I simply say this, Mr. Speaker, and the church groups understand it, if they want . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order. The minister is being interrupted almost continuously, and I know you'll want to give him the opportunity to answer the question.

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I suppose that it begs the question. I'm curious if the member opposite is calling all of those people that go shopping in Regina, that I'm most familiar with, at Superstore, are you calling them all atheists because they shop on Sunday? Are you calling them all non-union people? I can tell you that I haven't been there, but I saw one of your members opposite shopping there on a Sunday.

An Hon. Member: — So how can you see him if you weren't there?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Because the report came back to me. If you want, I'll name that one.

So in any event, Mr. Speaker, I believe that when the legislation is introduced . . . This problem of Sunday shopping is not just in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, it's across Canada. Ontario still doesn't know how to deal with it.

I believe that our legislation will be unique in the country, will be accepted by everybody in Saskatchewan. It will see it as fair. Those people that want to shop on Sundays will be allowed to; those that want to stay open on Sundays will be allowed to. No longer will we regulate their lives.

And conversely, if the people . . . and if the church groups don't want their people to shop, that's easy. Tell them from the pulpit not to support the stores that may legally stay open.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister's — my new question to the minister — the minister's powers of vision are only exceeded by his inability to tell the truth in this legislature about the input that he's had.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, don't you agree that this legislation really does not provide an option; that if one community stays open on a certain day, the

community that neighbours it doesn't have a choice but to stay open? And the result of that, Mr. Minister, won't you agree that that means that business people in rural Saskatchewan in communities within driving distances of the major centres are going to be wiped out by your legislation because they won't be able to compete with the change across this country?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess the members opposite simply refuse to listen. Demographic factors affect this decision, such as the significant increase in the labour force of single parents that don't have the opportunity to shop, the double income families that don't have time to spend together, and yes, even for them a day of shopping is a day out with the family.

So as you consider all this, and when he says that I don't consult with anybody, that's a joke. The people of the city of Regina clearly spoke out last year when they indicated that they preferred to shop on Sundays.

Having come from the business community prior to this new career, I can tell you that it was a contentious issue then when I was in the retail trade. And I would have loved to have opened, but there was a government of the day that said to me, you don't have that right, and you must stay closed. And yet, right across the aisle from me in a major shopping centre was located what we call a convenience or a drug store that sold all of my product that I couldn't even begin to compete with, either in evenings or on Sundays, and yet my customers told me that if I were able to be open, that they would have shopped at my store.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, I had staff, and I would have had to hire new staff to accommodate that. I would have created jobs to allow me the privilege to compete fairly with not a large multinational, but certainly with a large independent from Regina. And what's the difference? I believe that I had the right, conversely, if I chose not to open. I believe that my business was such that I didn't have to depend on that additional day — I provided good service, still did business whether I was open or not.

So I just simply say now this government will be deregulating people's lives. And for those consumers, for the large majority of taxpayer that wants the opportunity to shop on Sunday, it will be there, providing the business community is willing to provide them that service.

Proposals to Relieve Drought Situation

Mr. Goodale: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, tomorrow it's reported that you will be meeting in Calgary with the federal Minister of Agriculture and your provincial counterparts with respect to the drought.

I wonder if you'll be able to tell us today, at long last, what specific Saskatchewan proposals do you intend to take to that meeting about drought relief in western Canada? What are the items that are going to be on your list? And specifically, will you be seeking a drought payment directly to livestock producers in the range of \$40 to \$90 a

head as has been suggested by some Saskatchewan farm organizations?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, we will be meeting in Calgary tomorrow, the four western ministers of Agriculture and the federal minister. And we outlined three proposals . . . three-part proposal to the federal government, and I believe that they're going to respond in a positive fashion.

The first was additional money with respect to drought proofing; that is, water mechanisms, drilling, irrigation, so that we can have our feed supplies here even if there is sustained drought after months and months or indeed years.

Secondly would be cash payments to producers themselves — ranchers or farmers that have livestock to the basic beef herd and the sheep industry.

And third is anything in addition that we should do with respect to crop insurance; that is, include more kinds of commodities, topping up the crop insurance, adding to the mechanism that we already have in place in terms of the national agricultural strategy that allows us to top it up 10 or 15 per cent after 18 or 24 months of drought.

Finally, with respect to the actual level, I am a little reluctant to comment about the level yet until we meet with the four western premiers tomorrow. I'd say you're . . . to be fair, you're in the ball park, but I wouldn't want to elaborate any further on that because I want to hear the views of the other ministers in terms of what they think the payments should be and what it should look like and how we should allocate it and how we should have people apply for it. I at least owe them that, in terms of respect, to listen to their side of it before we make any final decisions.

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier will know that farmers and ranchers have been waiting for some details about this drought program for a very long period of time, and I wonder if the Premier can assure us that tomorrow will not just be another talking session, but in fact he and the other ministers involved in that discussion will be able to make specific announcements tomorrow so that farmers will know exactly where they stand without any further delay.

And can he also give us the assurance that any federal dollars that are involved in the solution to the drought problem will in fact be in addition to provincial programs and not simply a means of offsetting or subsidizing provincial treasuries in western Canada?

Hon. Mr. Devine: — To address the last question first, the proposal that went to, and that is before, the federal government is a cost-sharing proposal, so that each of us look at what the total problem might be, and they pay their share and we pay ours. That's what's before them, although I have not sat down with the other three western ministers of Agriculture in the presence of John Wise to go over that detail, but that was what John Wise and I talked about.

With respect to an announcement, it will depend on the

five players coming to an agreement and then making an announcement at the appropriate time. Obviously, I can't speak for the federal government and would not be able, or be in a position to say, yes, he will announce something tomorrow. What we hope to be able to do tomorrow is agree on what it will be, put the package together and announce it as quickly as possible. If it isn't tomorrow, it would be as soon as we can put all the statistical evidence together.

And something to do with how you allocate, where you should be making those payments. None of us like drought lines because they're very difficult, but we want to try and target it to the area that is deepest hurt. And we want to talk with the municipalities and our individual water corporations and our environmental people so that we can have a mechanism that is as fair as possible so the need goes to the rancher and the farmer that needs it, as opposed to people that obviously don't need it or don't need it

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 40 — An Act to amend The League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents Act

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. member, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents Act.

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

Bill No. 41 — An Act to amend The Teachers' Dental Plan Act

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — On behalf of the hon. member, I move first reading of a Bill to amend the Teachers' Dental Plan Act.

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

Bill No 42 — An Act to amend The Controverted Municipal Elections Act

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — On behalf of the hon. member, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Controverted Municipal Elections Act.

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

Bill No. 43 — An Act to amend The Tobacco Tax Act

Hon. Mr. Lane: — I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Tobacco Tax Act.

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

Bill No. 44 — An Act to amend The Department of Finance Act, 1983

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Department of Finance Act.

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

Bill No. 45 — An Act to amend The Department of Revenue and Financial Services Act

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, I beg to inform the Assembly that His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the subject matter of the Bill, recommends it to the consideration of the Assembly. And I move that a Bill, An Act to amend The Department of Revenue and Financial Services Act, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 46 — An Act respecting Certain Amendments to Certain Acts resulting from the enactment of The Department of Revenue and Financial Services Act, 1988

Hon. Mr. Lane: — I beg to inform the Assembly that His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the subject matter of the Bill, recommends it to the consideration of the Assembly, and I move that a Bill, an Act respecting Certain Amendments to Certain Acts resulting from the enactment of The Department of Revenue and Financial Services Act, 1988, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 47 — An Act to amend The Critical Wildlife Habitat Protection Act

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. member, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Critical Wildlife Habitat Protection Act.

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

Bill No. 48 — An Act to amend The Department of Social Services Act

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. member, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Department of Social Services Act.

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

Bill No. 49 — An Act to amend The Residential Services Act

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, on behalf of the hon. member, to amend The Residential Services Act.

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

Bill No. 50 — An Act respecting the Control of Distribution and the Consumption of Beverage Alcohol in Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I move, on behalf of the hon. member, a Bill respecting the Control of Distribution and the Consumption of Beverage Alcohol in Saskatchewan.

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

Bill No. 51 — An Act to amend The Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards Act

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. member, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards Act.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill ordered to be referred to the Standing Committee on Non-Controversial Bills.

Bill No. 52 — An Act to Amend The Queen's Bench Act

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I move on behalf of the hon. member, first reading of a Bill to amend The Queen's Bench Act.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill ordered to be referred to the Standing Committee on Non-Controversial Bills.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I wonder if I could ask leave to go back for a brief introduction.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to introduce to the members of the Assembly, through you, a group of 28 grade 5 and 6 students, facing me in the gallery, from St. Edward School in Saskatoon. They are accompanied here today by two of the teachers, Kevin McLean and Sharon Boechler; and chaperons, Annette Yarmovich and Margaret Worobey.

I want all members to join with me in welcoming them to the legislature, and I'll get an opportunity to speak to them later.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Urban Affairs
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 24**

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

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At my right, Dave Innes, my deputy minister. To his right, the assistant deputy minister, Keith Schneider. Behind me directly is Ron Davis, the executive director of municipal finance. And to his right, Don Harazny, director of administration. And you'll be pleased how I kept everybody to my right.

Item 1

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Not quite, Mr. Chairman. I think we have a few questions and they will take some time to ask. And depending on the answers, we will determine how long it will take. But I want to also join with the minister in welcoming the officials to the legislature. I know that they will be, as they have in the past been, of a great deal of assistance.

Now, Mr. Minister, I want to just take a minute or two and give you an outline of some of the major areas which I want to cover in your estimates in this Assembly today. And there are a number of many other things that we will want to touch on as well. But I will give you an idea of the major things that I want to pursue.

I want to be raising a number of issues of importance which are, I believe, of importance to urban governments; they're important to individual property owners, to business people. And we addressed some of that in question period this afternoon and, I might say, received very unsatisfactory answers. I hope that, given more time in estimates, you will be more forthcoming in providing the kind of estimates that the people of Saskatchewan expect. Also I think the questions that we have to pursue here today are of interest to the province as a whole.

One of the things that I want to pursue with you, and I will begin with that at the end of my remarks, is the matter of lack of government accountability. And I will be focusing more directly on you particularly, in your capacity as the Minister of Urban Affairs, because there are a number of issues which I think need to be raised and I hope that you will be able to provide the adequate answers.

What I mean by that, Mr. Minister, is that there were a number of questions that were asked from time to time of you to which you have committed and promised to give an answer, and those answers have not been made available. And I think that's really not a direct criticism of yourself, although it can be, but it's meant to be a general comment of, I think, what is an overall problem of this government — lack of accountability.

And that's a serious matter in a democratic system, in the British parliamentary system, where the Executive Council is expected to be responsible and accountable to the legislature — not to the political party which the Executive Council represents but to the legislature, which is the body to which people have elected representatives to raise their issues on their behalf and have those issues addressed.

I will pursue with you the matter of major cut-backs in

provincial government funding of municipal government. And that's a very serious concern because there have been very serious financial cut-backs which under your stewardship, as the Minister of Urban Affairs, that have taken place since the last provincial election when the government thought it had a couple of years in which it could weather some criticism.

And even if the price was high at the local level — and I notice the member from Kinistino nods his head in agreement — but I want to say to you, Mr. Minister, that you will find in the end that that will be a very mistaken judgement, that you cannot deliberately go out and try to fool people and inflict unnecessary pain on families and individuals and municipal governments and then hope that in the last two years you will be able to undo all of that damage. You will maybe undo some of the damage, Mr. Minister, but I tell you now that when you come out of an election in which you are the government but you got 1 per cent less of the popular vote, you don't have very much room in which to operate electorally.

(1445)

Point five: still you are behind, and you're going to have to do some awful great magic — which I don't think even your House Leader is capable of performing — in order to be able to recoup the damage that you have cost. One of the problems that has been created by your inadequacy of provincial contributions to municipal governments in the form of adequate revenue sharing, which practically doesn't exist any more, is the devastating effect that it's had on property taxes throughout all of Saskatchewan.

And I bring to your attention, and I know you will have some answers to try and camouflage it, that even in your Estimates of this year, in this blue book of '88-89 Estimates, it shows that the Department of Urban Affairs' expenditures for 1989 are \$89.390 million, but in 1982, some six years ago, the expenditures of the Department of Urban Affairs were \$162.138 million.

Now I don't doubt that you will get up when we get to this issue and you will say, oh well, some things have been moved around to other departments. The problem is that you won't be able to tell us that after it was moved to the other departments that funding has disappeared in many cases for many of the projects that the funding was provided.

Now that, Mr. Minister, is a drop of \$73 million during a period of six years, when inflation has been like it always has been, some years higher and some years lower, but always an inflation rate of near 5 per cent or more. Is it any wonder then that we have communities like Regina, if you take a 1,000 square foot, three-bedroom bungalow, fairly modest home, where 1981 the taxes, the property taxes were \$1,102; in this year, when you account for the removal of the property improvement grant, the cost to that taxpayer is \$1,767, an increase of \$664 in property tax on a home of 1,000 square feet.

And if you take the example of the city of Saskatoon, where in 1981 on a similar home the property tax was \$867, it is now \$1,502 if you account for the removal of the property improvement grant — an increase of \$695 in

six years. Now that is a massive increase in the property tax.

If you go to another community — and I give you three different sizes — the city of Yorkton, and you take a home and do an estimate based on computation of mill rate on a home with an assessment of \$11,000, in 1981 the property tax was \$858 on the average. It's now \$1,395, an increase of \$535, all because of your cut-back in provincial revenue sharing and capital funds and other kind of funding that all of a sudden after the election you decided you're going to cut back because you've got to find some way to repair the deficit that the ministers of Finance of your government have brought upon the people of Saskatchewan. So you decide you're going to solve this deficit by putting it on the backs of the property taxpayers — one of the most unfair taxes that we know of.

I'll give you one more example, that of Balgonie, which is a smaller community. In 1981, that property tax, if you take an estimate based on computation of mill rate on a home with an assessment of \$4,000 prior to reassessment in 1985 and an assessment of \$8,500 after 1985, in 1981 the tax was \$656 — it's now \$1,392, an increase of \$846 in the property tax.

Now I say to you, Mr. Minister, that that is a massive increase in property tax and it comes about only because of a deliberate and calculated policy of the government to shift the burden of taxation to the local level, and the usually results in property.

Now that's happened because of cut-backs in revenue sharing; that's happened because of cut-backs in the municipal capital fund which has been eliminated. In 1982 the municipal capital fund provided \$18 million to urban municipalities. In 1988-89 it provides exactly zero. Now there are needed projects which have been abandoned or deferred; in either case, its going to cost a lot more money in the end.

We have sewage systems that are 25 — in some cases 40 — years old and need replacing. We have water systems in disrepair at a time that comes to mind, especially during a time of drought when, you know, with disrepaired water systems there is massive leakage, and communities can therefore lose a lot of the water, the scarce water that they have. But yet you have destroyed or eliminated the municipal capital fund which could be money used to help replace some of this — streets and sidewalks which need replacing, and all of this in the end will be much more expensive because of the delay, because of inflation and because of the stacking up of all of this work that is not being done.

And furthermore, you could be creating badly needed jobs in the process, and what better way to do it than the building of needed community facilities which the community must have in order for a modern-day society to exist in the way we expect it to exist.

I will also be wanting to ask you some questions, Mr. Minister, on revenue sharing, which in 1987-88 had a 1 per cent cut and, when you take into consideration inflation this year, had a further cut of a large amount.

Now, Mr. Minister, this year revenue sharing has been frozen, after you cut it last year by 1 per cent, now I know you're going to say that in the subvote under revenue sharing it shows an increase of \$585,000 from the previous year. But you can say that if you want; I'm still going to say and I'm going to maintain that you have frozen the revenue sharing, because this is a separate fund that you have developed and you put it into revenue sharing to make it look like you provided an increase, which you have not — a neat trick that doesn't fool anybody.

It was simply created so that no municipalities will suffer a greater reduction than 3 per cent because of a new method of assessing population of communities; that's why it's there. And I'm going to have a lot of questions to ask about that when we get to that subject in these estimates.

The truth is that since the election in 1986 revenue sharing funding has had a major cut-back, and you continue that process. And you do that while you're able to say to the oil corporations of this country that they can go ahead and have, over that period of time, almost a \$2 billion tax-free royalty holiday. Now that seems to me a very serious negative . . . a very serious flaw in the setting of priorities by the government when you favour oil corporations, which are making multi-millions of dollars in profits, and you say to municipalities: raise your property taxes by up to \$800-and-some, over the period of the six years that this government has been in power.

Now I'm not saying this in isolation. I'm not saying this in isolation. Even those people — and I'm not sure that you're accurate in this — but even those people you seem to think are your friends, politically, and maybe some of their spokesmen are — but I submit to you that most of their membership are not any more, and that is even the chamber of commerce has stated in their news-letter the following, when they refer to your budget of last year and this year and they say: it simply means the province is transferring some of the deficit from the provincial coffers to those of municipal government. However, municipal governments have fewer resources from which to obtain funds, and it has meant that many of them will have to cut some services and still go to the people with a tax increase.

Everybody is telling you that, Mr. Minister, and I only regret that, as is the case with the ward system subject and with the store hours subject, you and your government in its stubborn way have refused to acknowledge that here are people who have an opinion out there that ought to be respected and listened to.

And I want to also ask you questions about the business tax, which I will at some length, because it's a very important issue. And here again the government, through you as the Minister of Urban Affairs, has decided they're going to shirk their responsibility and they're going to shift it on somebody else and wash their hands clean and say, I have nothing to do with this. That may be nice politics on your part, but I don't think it's smart government.

And I'm going to be talking to you about the government abrogating its responsibility on regulating store hours,

which is nothing short of a massive attack on the small and independent business people of Saskatchewan and, more particular, the business people of rural Saskatchewan. You may not see it that way but the reality of it is that that's what in fact it is.

And of course you know already that we will be pursuing at some length the government's stubborn attack on the ward system that we have in Saskatchewan, or the municipal electoral system, in spite of almost unanimous, almost unanimous comments throughout Saskatchewan that you should not and that you're going in to the wrong direction. I'm going to ask you about your government's neglect of student employment by removing the municipalities and non-profit organizations from eligibility from the student employment program.

And so these are just some of the things that I will want to talk to you about, Mr. Minister. But as I said earlier, I want to begin with some routine questions — and I normally don't start with routine questions — because these particular ones highlight the fact that the government has not provided information it promised to provide; in your case, in your estimates last year, you promised that you would provide certain information which we still don't have.

I want to pursue that for a while, and I want to do it at the beginning of the estimates for a very specific reason, Mr. Minister; that is, if you don't have those answers when we begin.

An Hon. Member: — We sent them to Harry; he threw them away.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — No you didn't send them to . . . I'll read to you what you sent to him, but I'm going to ask them at the beginning so that because if you don't have the answers, it will give your officials an opportunity to put the answers together and you can give them to us before we complete your estimates.

Now you're going to have choice in your estimates; either you get those answers to us, or we could take a long time to complete. I simply say that to you because I don't want to mislead in the end, but these are very routine questions to which you ought to have the answers available.

Now my colleague, the member from Regina Victoria, asked you some questions last year, and he provided, in fact to assist you, those questions in writing. We are now into a new fiscal year, we're some eight months later, and we still don't have those answers.

And I'll give you one example, Mr. Minister. My colleague asked you if you would provide the details of all the in-province air travel by yourself and your personal staff in 1986-1987. Seems like a simple routine question. At that time you said you would provide it after the estimates were complete. Today is May 30, 1988, and we still don't have them. In fact you wrote to the former Urban Affairs critic and you simply said, all of this information will be provided in the orders and motions of returns numbers 60 and 103, none of which have been tabled.

So although you gave an undertaking to give an answer to that question in this House, you tried to find some excuse in order not to provide it, which obviously has to lead us to believe that there is something shady going on.

So I ask you, Mr. Minister, are you at least today able to provide an answer to that question which was asked eight months ago?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, while my officials are checking as to just why that question hasn't been responded to, I suppose by way of explanation I can say that I felt it was covered in the motions for return. There's certainly nothing shady or anything to hide. I wasn't even the minister for that year, so I'm sure that my colleague had no problems, and we're looking that up.

But just in response to the opening remarks by the member from Regina North East, I suppose that I will be looking forward, Mr. Chairman, with a great deal of interest to discuss store hours and business tax. Small rural stores are competing now with the people that are open, and they have been for some years, so that it's nothing new to them.

(1500)

And the business tax will be an interesting discussion. I've said this on many occasions publicly, both within this Assembly and without. I say it again, and I repeat it at this time: the members opposite simply don't understand business — they never have, they never will; it's beyond their reasoning, beyond their philosophical interest to understand business. Everybody in the business community recognizes that.

They had opportunity after opportunity for years and years to do something to assist the business community. They never did, and I think that it was probably because they really don't know how to deal with the issues of the private sector, and perhaps that's their biggest problem. They don't understand business.

They don't understand urban parks. We had an interesting scenario here last week with the questions from the member opposite. They just simply don't understand how the urban park financing and operations work. So that's interesting.

So now when we get into this situation of urban financing, Mr. Chairman, I don't believe they understand urban financing as well. Some of the comments and observations that were made by the member from Regina North East — again he is either trying to fool the general public, or he does that either unwittingly or by choice. You know, he's simply not saying the right thing, and I think it's because they don't understand.

They keep talking about the property tax structure and the various comparisons and the increases that have occurred, and I'm sure that the figures that they use and quote include not only municipal taxes but the education portion of them as well. And if that's the case, then I have to deal purely with the municipal side of the financing, and there's a vast difference. If they want to talk about the

education tax side of it on property tax, that rightfully belongs to my Minister of Education. I can only deal with the municipal side; I can only deal with my budget.

I was pleased to hear him admit that our finding level went down \$73 million dollars, because 80 million of it alone was with regard to the property improvement grant. So that as a result, in fact we're already higher because that one program alone was \$80 million. He says we've gone down 73, so we've simply added to the funding to municipal governments as a result of our funding.

Also the seniors' grant that's still in place has been moved to another area, and that would be about 35 million. So I suppose it might be fair to say then that over the years our funding has indeed increased some 35 or \$45 million. So they admit that.

They have to understand something else about municipal financing that they clearly don't understand, and that is that the revenue of the municipality is much more stable than the revenue of a government. They don't deal with the prices of world potash, the world prices of oil, the world prices of grain that affect our revenues so dramatically. And as a result, they don't have the variances that we do in revenue, as a provincial government, so we have to take all those things into consideration.

I think that the true form of comparison, Mr. Chairman, the true form of comparison is not so much the dollars and cents, and how much goes in or how much comes out or all the rest of it, but the true percentage of change between revenue sharing — the money that the provincial government gives — and the actual mill rate charged by a municipality at the municipal level. That, indeed, is the true comparison because the municipalities, Mr. Chairman, their revenues automatically increase every year as a result of their assessment base going up every year — new construction, new homes, new offices and the like. So that as that assessment base climbs, certainly their revenue climb with it.

In 1982, for instance, the municipal mill rates rose 9 per cent, but in 1982 our revenue sharing increased 11.5 per cent. So our revenue sharing exceeded the mill rate increase. In 1983, 7 per cent was the revenue-sharing increase while mill rate only went up 6 per cent; 1984, again we see the same scenario, and on and on. So that we have kept up with the mill rate on the revenue-sharing side, clearly.

It's interesting to note, too, that as you compare across the country, grant per capita of revenue-sharing operating expenses, that our grant per capita this year is \$90. Interestingly enough, Manitoba, \$39 — \$39. So they'll say, well let's compare last year. Well fine, I'll compare last year. Last year we were \$89, and Manitoba under an NDP administration, \$38. And they say that we're not doing our share. Even our neighbours to the west — Alberta, \$56; B.C., \$40. So clearly in western Canada, Saskatchewan's revenue sharing is much higher than our neighbouring provinces.

So having responded somewhat to his original question

or whatever, I'll sit down now and I'll check with my officials concerning the exact thing regarding the question that was asked.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — While the minister's doing that, Mr. Chairman, let me respond very briefly, and much more briefly than my initial remarks, to some of the things that the minister said.

And I simply want to say that when he talks about some people not understanding the private sector, I simply say to him, he doesn't understand the nature of Saskatchewan. He seems to reflect the attitude of this government that because they've been flying the world and they take an airplane, they spend too much time in New York and Los Angeles and wherever else they go, and they think, oh, isn't this great; I've been here for a weekend, I wish it was . . . it would be nice if it was that way in Regina. And then they bring some of these concocted ideas and somehow think that that's Saskatchewan and you have to bring in legislation in that model. It's a bunch of nonsense.

That model, that model, Mr. Chairman, would have resulted in Saskatchewan being a province like North Dakota with a population of \$500,000. Who do you think built this province?

An Hon. Member: — Five hundred thousand people.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Five hundred thousand people. Who do you think built this province? The people who live here, not the multinational chain store operations who want to come in here and want to close down our small, independent business people. It was those independent business people who built this province as part of the larger component of Saskatchewan.

If the minister knows so much about the private sector, I simply would ask him, then why doesn't he listen to what they advise him? The private sector is saying to the minister — and that is the Saskatchewan private sector — is saying to the minister — and I won't pursue that at length because I have a lot of time in my agenda for that — but they're saying to him, the province should have a common pause day. Small businesses are saying that; independent businesses are saying that; municipalities are saying that.

Now this is the minister who suggests he understand the private sector so well, and yet says to them, say what you want; I'm not paying any attention.

It's true that one of the reasons why there is a reduction in Urban Affairs, urban spending, is because of the \$80 million removal of the property improvement grant, which essentially was an \$80 million increase on Saskatchewan property. To the taxpayer, it increased the taxes by \$80 million, and it took out of those small-business people in Balgonie and in Yorkton and in Hudson Bay and in Tisdale, proportionally, \$80 million of consumer dollars which used to be spent in those communities.

And I say also that for a home owner whose income has not kept up with inflation, the minister's explanation of

increases in mill rate and increases in taxation because of inflation or assessment is hardly going to be of great comfort. When your income has stayed at whatever it is, and you're living in a 1,000 square foot home, and your taxes have increased by \$800 a year, saying that, oh, your assessment has changed, is not going to help that family who's barely making a living and can barely afford to provide the necessary clothes for their kids to go to school. And I say to the minister, think of a better argument than that one.

And don't give us this nonsense about comparison to other provinces. Manitoba maybe is \$39 per capita if you use selective funding, which you have so done — selected funding. And if you ignore the fact that in Manitoba there is a major tax rebate program to home owners which you don't have in Saskatchewan because you eliminated, why don't you include that in there? Then you would find out that Saskatchewan does not compare very well.

I won't respond to all of the comments that the minister made, Mr. Chairman, because I don't want to do it all at the beginning; I want to do it in an organized way under each of the subjects. I simply want to go back to the question I asked him and ask if he's prepared to provide it, the answer.

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again he covered a little bit of territory and emits these numbers, and he keeps getting himself into a little bit of a jackpot. He talks about \$80 million that is gone from the property improvement grant just as though it was gone off the face of the earth. Later on today we'll be getting into the home program which this government brought in to supplement that very thing that he's talking about. And it's not a direct payment on the tax.

But he mentioned small businesses in the various communities throughout the province. Let me tell you, Mr. Chairman, what those small businesses have garnered already from the home program — fast approaching three-quarters of a billion dollars — three quarters of a billion dollars — \$750 million in economic activity. And he talks a tenth of that. Obviously he doesn't understand. I too can bring forward a list of small businesses in small communities that would just overwhelm him. And he says, no support.

I have a letter here from the Moose Jaw chamber of commerce that agree with us. The Moose Jaw chamber has reiterated its stand on business operating hours. This is what I've been saying. The individual operator of any business, no matter the type, the size, the product, the services, establish their own hours of operation.

And these letters keep coming in. And no, if you want to attach a name again like they always do, Mr. Chairman, to the employees of these people . . . I don't know why they continually pick on employees. This was not signed by an employee. This was signed by the president of the Moose Jaw chamber of commerce, a letter endorsing us. And all of these come over.

You know, I too will use a little bit of research. Here's from *The Globe and Mail*, a little bit of research. And if

you bear with me, it's kind of comical. But *The Globe and Mail* kind of puts the store hours issue where it belongs. The headline is "Who's minding the store?"

David Peterson reveals his complex new plan to allow and ban Sunday shopping simultaneously. Stores within 102 metres of churches will be closed except those on the sunny side of the street or next to fire halls. Big stores will be closed unless they sell red underwear or leather-bound opera glasses. Little stores may open but only if they sell bathtub plugs and whole wheat muffins. Medium size stores may open if they sell flea powder but not glazed doughnuts in the same aisle. And any store with a south-west exposure will be able to open on the first and third Sundays of every second month barring rain-outs with discount coupons.

That's exactly what I've been saying, Mr. Chairman. There are so many regulations across this country that nobody knows what's left to open any more. We're bringing some reason to the entire situation, and I say this: when that legislation is finally introduced and brought in and the municipalities see it, it would surprise me totally if the municipalities didn't think that that was a real good way to go.

It's fair to the municipalities as far as they relate to being elected officials. It's fair to their consumers. It's fair to all of the people of this province whether they represent double working families, whether they represent, indeed, unions, because sometimes this is the only protected little area left. And we find our union friends having to work on Sundays in the communication business, in the hospitals, and all the rest of it. When do they go shopping? So that this is really more than fair.

He mentioned assessment. And yes, the reassessment cycle started under the NDP administration, and there was a major reassessment done throughout the province.

But what did this government do? We took action. We took the whole matter of assessment and moved it into a third-party agency, the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency, which is divorced from government. I happen to be the minister in charge, by view of its legislation. But on this board sits two members from SUMA, two members from SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), one from the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association), and two that are appointed by government. And they sit and deal with the entire logic and problems and good news that will come from this assessment agency.

(1515)

So we did something about it. And the comparison of numbers — I'm glad that the member recognized that you can compare apples and battleships and you can compare apples with apples — and I just simply point that out as he has done, as he chooses to leave out true comparisons and try to fool the people of this province. I don't do that. I clearly indicated that I was going to talk

mill rates, and I'd be more than willing to compare one area against another so that the people that are out there understand how their tax structure works and who indeed assesses and who indeed implements and establishes the mill rate structure.

Regarding the questions that were asked earlier in the year, I do apologize on behalf of my department. That information was available and unfortunately, through an oversight, it was sitting in the binder, in the briefing. I will present that to the members opposite at this time. There is clearly nothing to hide, and all I can do is apologize. It was a little bit of an oversight, if you would give that to the member. I've been keeping them busy.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Now that we have that answer, and I accept your explanation except to the extent that I know it's not the fault of the department, Mr. Minister; the department had this information prepared a long time ago, and we have had other . . . I happened to have been chairman of the Public Accounts Committee over the last period of time, and I know that whenever we ask a department of government, the officials — this is where the ministers don't attend and so it becomes much more efficient — when we ask the officials to provide, much more complicated than this, information, we had it within three weeks. So we know where the information has been, and I accept the fact that your apology and the fact that you must have forgotten it because of your very busy schedule or whatever the reason is.

But now that we have that, I draw your attention to further question which we asked. My colleague from Victoria, or Regina, he said would you provide the details of all the in-province air travel for yourself and your personal staff. That's the one you have provided. But now I can ask you: will you provide me that information for 1987-1988 fiscal year which ended in March? Do you have that available?

I think, sorry, I have checked this. They've provided it — very thoughtful — '87-88 and '86-87.

Now let me go on to the next one then. We also asked the list of all out-of-province trips taken by the minister and his personal staff in 1986-87. And I ask you: do you have that information here? And can you give me that information from 1987-88 as well as you have with the previous question?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, I've been waiting for this question. In our government some of our various portfolios and our ministers must travel out of province, clearly; our Premier travelling as he does to put Saskatchewan on the map; our Deputy Premier with Trade; our minister of Trade, and the like. So those that have to travel, must travel. I happen to have a portfolio, Mr. Chairman, that doesn't take me away out of the province, but rather keeps me very, very busy here at home. I can tell you that for the fiscal year of April 1, '87, to March 31, '88, I have not spent 5 cents on travel out of this province as a minister. Not a nickel.

An Hon. Member: — Three cents?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Not even three cents, as the member from Regina Victoria asks. But I will, as was asked, supply them with an out-of-province travel from '86 to '87. And again, in that year I didn't spend not even 1 cent or 3 cents or 5 cents. My out-of-province travel in that year was also absolute zero. I have not left this province; my portfolio doesn't require that I do. But one of the other ministers prior to my assuming this portfolio had occasion to go to a national conference; I will supply that information. And also, I will supply a more complete list of my current in-province travel because I do have occasion to travel around my province. As I mentioned, the list that you got was a little bit incomplete; it's been updated. I'll ask the page to take that over. Thank you.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Frankly, I'm not surprised that with your great statements about consultation and then not paying any attention to what they're telling you, that people have stopped inviting you to come and speak to them.

But I go back to my first question because I think there's something incomplete here, Mr. Minister. On the in-province travel of Minister of Urban Affairs, the last trip that I have is Waskesiu, May 31, 1987. It is now added to this other stuff that we just got here? This is in-province travel, or did you stop travelling around the province after May 31, 1987?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, that's on the second list that I just provided. And as I said, they do ask me to speak quite frequently around the province and I do do that, and that's why that first part was incomplete. I sent them a second one.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you. I'm glad that we have that now. Now the other question that was asked is, some time in October I believe, is: did the Department of Urban Affairs charter or lease any aircraft in the year 1986-1987? If yes, could you provide me with the dates of each trip, the purpose of the trip, who went on the trip, the firm you purchased the flight from, and how much each of these trips cost the people of Saskatchewan? And once again, that was asked for 1986-1987, never provided. I ask you, do you have that now, and can you do the same for 1987-1988?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, perhaps we can get on with some questioning. My officials are going to look into that. Most of our flights are done on executive air. Every now and then it may be necessary to charter an in-flight . . . or charter an in-province charter because of executive air being booked. If that's the case, we'll check our records, and then if we have any, we will send them over.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you. If you're going to do that, then I remind you and I draw to your attention another question that was asked, of which we have not received an answer for some eight months: is the Department of Urban Affairs, either directly or contract out, any polling during 1986-87? If so, what did those polling cost, when was it conducted, by whom was it done, and for what purpose? Once again, no response. Can you provide it for 1986-1987? And I ask you to provide it for 1987-1988 as well. And if your official needs some time, sometime in the evening when we're

back here again, I'm sure they'll be able to provide it for us.

Hon. Mr. Klein: — I've been advised that we have done no polling, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — In neither year?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — That's correct, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Have you had anybody do some polling for you in another department, from which you were then able to get information?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — I think in fairness to myself, Mr. Chairman, I should be allowed the privilege of that question when I'm in my other . . . with my other officials because I'd hate to give you a wrong answer. And I can't determine whether or not I have had any done, by memory, at this time.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well then it would be quite sufficient if you were to instruct your officials who are with you today to do some research on that. Department of Finance may do the polling and may provide you some information because of questions specifically geared for Urban Affairs. Can you undertake to ask your officials to search that out and provide it for me later?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — I'll ask my officials to search that out, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, one other question and then I will move along.

I noticed that we asked some questions about your personal staff — the name, the job title, and the salary level of your personal staff, a question we ask every year. You said that this would be provided in the order for return. We don't have it for '86-87, and I would ask it for '87-88. Also I will ask: during both of those years, over that period of time, has there been any changes in pay, and if so, how much? And can you provide that for me now?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — I have that compiled here for the current year, Mr. Chairman, that I'll provide through the page at this point in time. I believe that it's complete.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — This is for the current year. Can you also provide the answer to the question asked for '86-87, and can you also tell us — because this doesn't give me the information of my last question — corollary to the question which was: have there been any increases in pay during this period of time, and if so, how much?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Okay, Mr. Chairman, I got a whole bunch of paper here. My department is really good at keeping this stuff, and they should set a shining example, and they do. So I haven't even, you know, searched it because I have nothing to hide. But they have compiled, first of all, the chartered aircraft use, and I'll ask the page to take that over. I would point out that although it's rather lengthy, it does include all of our northern offices, and our staff in the North is required to use quite a bit of chartered aircraft so that . . . that will provide that.

I have also here the staff from last year. They will notice when they compare it that the names are different. That's because I had staff changes in my office with people leaving and the like. Any increases are negligible and he will be able to see . . . those that stayed in our employ, the small amount of increase, if any, that they did in fact receive.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, during your 1987 estimates you said in the discussion in this legislature that you were going to have a new Local Government Board Act, or something similar to that. Anyway, it was going to be a consolidation of The Local Government Board, Provincial Planning Appeals Board, Saskatchewan Assessment Appeals Board. And you also, at that time, indicated that it would be introduced in the fall session of '87. It so happened we started in the summer and extended through the fall.

Can I ask you, then, to report on the status of this legislation which you said you were going to introduce last fall, and yet has not seen the light of day in this Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, I'm glad that my critic acknowledged the fact that my staff was reduced.

With regard to the piece of legislation to which he refers, it is a lengthy Bill, and it's going to be called The Saskatchewan Municipal Board Act, I believe, and we have been working on it for quite some time. It covers a whole multitude of things in what we're trying to combine.

I hope the we're in a position to introduce that legislation later on this week, and I believe that it should be a non-controversial Bill. And I offer this to the members opposite, that in view of the length of the Bill I would be prepared to offer the assistance of my department officials to explain the Bill to them, in the event that they would believe that it is non-controversial, and just tell them what we're trying to accomplish and why.

And certainly, if they choose to argue it in this legislature, I don't have any problem with that. But it is a rather large Bill. It was very, very difficult to draw up. I hope to introduce it later in the week.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you. I appreciate that. Mr. Minister, one other question which your government, across the piece, has not liked to handle very much because of your massive expenditures of public money on political advertising, mainly. In '86-87, we estimate that your government has spent well in excess of \$25 million, if you consider the Crown corporation sector as well as the government proper, \$25 million which could have been well used to provide hospital beds, well used to provide additional revenue-sharing money to municipalities to reduce the amount of property tax increases which has been a great burden on the property owners of Saskatchewan.

(1530)

It is because you're embarrassed with this expenditure of

money that you did not answer the question asked for '86-87 on the cost of advertising during that year, and the dates on which it was done, the names of the firms who did the advertising, and the purpose that the advertising was for?

Now I noticed you very selectively provided the information that you spent with Brown & Associates, and with the office services revolving fund, one which was \$2,741.96 and the other one, \$38,896.56. But when it came to the big one, and that is the advertising cost by Urban Affairs in '86-87 to Brigdens Photo and Graphics Ltd., Roberts & Poole Advertising Corp., and Dome Advertising and Dome Media Buying Ltd., we yet don't have the answer.

Now can I ask you to provide that answer which was asked eight months ago for 1986-1987, and will you be so good as to provide that information for 1987-1988? And while you're doing that, can you tell us what your advertising budget is for the present estimate which we're considering here today?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, I . . . we don't spend much money on advertising; it's all pretty regular stuff. And the inference of political buying, and everything, is kind of unfortunate because this is all stuff that we have to do on our normal day-to-day operation. I don't have any problem sharing it and sending this information there. And as a matter of fact, our total advertising budget in the first year, '86-87, was \$67,000, not a very significant portion. It's all listed there if he wants to see that for the notice of a public hearing we did buy from Dome Media Buying Services, \$127.30, and another notice of public hearing for the same firm that was \$428, and like that. It's all here for his scrutiny.

I will point out that in '87-88 we reduced our advertising budget somewhat, and we're now down to below \$55,000. It's all shown in here. It's Saskatchewan Gazette(s) and Sask Government Printing, and the like, and all the various agencies that are involved. And I'll ask the page to take this information over to him as well.

Mr. Chairman, for the current year we have estimated our advertising budget at \$100,000.

An Hon. Member: — Oh, federal election, eh?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — And you know, again I suppose we'll be accused of spending money on the federal election, as the member from Saskatoon South points out. But I suppose all I can do at this time is repeat what the Minister of Finance said in the legislature last week. Even in a budget year, our government's total advertising budget was well below what the NDP spent on advertising in their election year. When you consider rate increases, and the like, that have occurred in four or six years, I think that that's pretty commendable.

And if they want to accuse us of political spending, I suppose that's within their realm, but I hope that when they see the advertising that is done in the department . . . Not everything we do in government is bad, Mr. Speaker.

I mean, sometimes we do good things, and they might not

realize it. But one day I would like to hear them admit that, by golly, you know, they seem to do pretty well in this department, or that this program is good and not political. So perhaps we might have to wait a long time for that day, but one day it might come.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Minister, I might just say that it's so hard to find much good that your government does, as is reflected by the results of Saskatoon Eastview and Regina Elphinstone, that we can only concentrate on the things that are bad.

After all, having said that, that seems to be clearly one of the functions of the opposition, is to have you accountable for the mismanagement and the lack of accountability and all of those things which your government has become reputable for in a very negative way.

Now I'm glad that this year you have provided information that you last year did not provide; that you're, at least on those issues, a little better prepared than were you last year. I hope that when I get into what I want to do right away and have a discussion with you on the ward system, that you will be able to provide us a clear set of answers and tell us today that you have decided to listen to what your caucus is telling you and what the public is telling you, and not bring in this legislation which nobody wants but yourself because of some personal, political vendetta that you want to impose on the citizens of Saskatchewan because they haven't, in large numbers, elected too many of your personal friends to the city council in the city of Regina.

Mr. Minister . . . and I want to address that for a moment and ask you some questions. I mean, one of the things that I think is highlighted more than anything else by your stubborn approach on this matter of municipal electoral legislation, is the fact that you have a total and complete disregard for the people who are going to be affected by any legislation you bring forward on the municipal electoral system. And that can be described in no other way than the desire of a government, or maybe even the minister, to act in a dictatorial way, highly unseemly in our system of government, and do so regardless of what the majority thinks. Because from all of the comments that you've been making up until now, you have certainly not in any way indicated that you have listened to the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association which has now finally, very clearly, told you what they think of your proposals.

You have not listened to all of those municipalities, which I have on record in my file before me, who have said to you that you're wrong. You've consulted in a serious way with no one. You simply went off on a tangent and hired, at great cost, a former cabinet minister to do some research for you, to see if he could possibly come up with some arguments that you could defend your position with.

And I hope that later today you'll be able to give us the price of this individual who you hired. And if you can't do it now, I serve notice to you that later I will be asking you for that, and your officials might as well start getting some of that information together.

You're supported by no one in your blind charge on this, except by some close Conservative friends in big business, people in high places who think that somehow by doing away with the ward system they can then take control of municipal government in cities where there is now a ward system, and have things their way.

The whole proposal of yours, Mr. Minister, is politically motivated. It has got nothing to do with good municipal government, it has got nothing to do with providing the kind of democratic process, and facilitating of the democratic process that dwellers and ratepayers in our cities ought to have a right to expect.

And for that, Mr. Minister, I must say no one should be able to commend you. I don't like to say that, but quite frankly, I find it rather distasteful when any minister of the Crown uses some personal motive, some partisan political motive to try to do things that the public in urban centres opposes. And if they had remained silent and said nothing, then I guess to some degree your position might have some credibility, but they have not. These are people who normally don't come out and storm the barricades and say something to government that they disagree with in a big way, but they have on this issue.

Your response has been simply to attack, simply to attack those men and women who have been elected to municipal councils saying that they have been irresponsible. And because of the ward system somehow it has caused municipal spending and debt to get out of control, which is a bunch of nonsense and you know it, and yet you've gone ahead and said it, and you've tried to create some kind of political problem to municipal people.

I reject personally, and I reject on behalf of my colleagues in this Assembly, those allegations, because these are people who are closest to the electorate. These are people who get elected to serve their electorate in their cities, and by and large they do it well under, I might say, very extreme difficulties imposed by your administration — with the cut-backs in funding, with the cut-backs in revenue sharing, with the abolition of the municipal capital funding, with the abolition of a recreation facilities grant funding, with the cut-backs in the transit assistance programs. And that is only a partial list; a longer list I will get to when we get to municipal funding.

I say to you, Mr. Minister, and I don't think you will disagree, that municipal government is extremely important and we should provide the best possible democratic system for the election of municipal government. We should not impose on those people, those ratepayers in Regina or Saskatoon or Prince Albert, a system which does nothing but create confusion, reduces the amount of participation by voter turn-out — which we know and record is there to show it very clearly — and a system that is not as close to the people as this present system is.

Most people in this country — and Saskatchewan is no exception, in fact Saskatchewan probably more so than most parts of this country — believe that a democratic political system is the best form of political system. And

many other systems have been tried throughout the world, and none of them have worked, and here you go and threaten to take it away from them.

This isn't an old battle. When the municipalities of Regina and Saskatoon were converted to the ward system in 1973, it was made very clear at that time, Mr. Minister, that they would be able and be given an opportunity to vote on it and if they decided that they didn't want it, they could reject it. Well they had that vote. You can call it a plebiscite, you can call it what you want, the fact is that the people at that city level made that decision.

In the city of Regina, I believe, it was by a margin of 9,000 — it certainly was 70 per cent. And in the city of Saskatoon, it was also substantial. And the city of Prince Albert, they did it on their own and voted to have a ward system. And I'm not surprised at that because they learned with the experience of the ward system that the different needs of the different parts of the city were not any longer being neglected as they used to be. It allows the people to get close to their aldermen or alderwomen or councillors, whichever their title is, and make sure that their concerns are addressed, and that hasn't caused the overall interest of the city to be lost sight of, as you would like to suggest. And that, too, is a bunch of nonsense.

The past experience has shown you that without a ward system the tendency is for the election of people who are powerful, either economically or because they are placed in situations where they can have a lot of publicity because of their particular jobs, it's to the disadvantage of everybody else who may want to run for municipal office.

You automatically say if you abolish the ward system that you cut out anybody without wealth because of the expensive running in a city-wide municipal election. But why would you want to do that? Why would you want to say to people who have a job at Ipsco, or people who work for Canadian Linen Supply, or people who may have a small insurance business, or people who may have modest incomes: you no longer are going to be able to run in municipal politics because I'm going to make sure you can't afford it.

Why would you want to say that in a democratic system unless you are motivated to make sure as best you can that only a certain elite gets elected to municipal government so that they can be — who are the friends of the Progressive Conservative Party — so that they can have their way at the expense of the general population. That's the reason why we are hearing the kinds of things that we're hearing from the minister opposite, Mr. Chairman. It's got nothing to do with better municipal government.

(1545)

Even the minister, a year ago — he's had an unusual transformation — a year ago he said the following, I quote from Hansard of October 1987. He said:

I can tell you that the local government administrations over the past four years have done very, very well in scrutinizing their budgets, spending their

money efficiently, spending their money effectively, and still looking at ways to continue to improve that.

Now I agree. Who wouldn't agree? Except somehow this minister who says, tell me what you think; I'm here to consult; I'm here to listen; and then forgets that he said it, went on to say different things in 1988, when he said:

Councillors act mostly on behalf of their particular ward as the resulting system puts political pressure on councillors to do things for their wards, but in the process on one speaks for the city as a whole.

What happened to his earlier statement in 1987 in which the councillors were doing such a good job? The only thing happened is that he got pressure from certain people in the city . . . the chamber of commerce in Regina and certain people in the Conservative Party saying, you've got to make sure that only Conservatives get elected to municipal government. And so he's changed his rhetoric.

Then he went on to say . . . And I really should say where he said it. The first one he said in the *Leader-Post*, March 15, 1988. And then in the *Star-Phoenix*, March 22, 1988, the minister said:

Huge increases in the city's expenditures coincided with the introduction of the ward system.

What happened to the responsible administrators and the responsible councillors that he talked about in 1987, other than some new political motivation?

And then on March 30, 1988 . . . This is all coming in March, when the minister is either testing the water or trying to create the political climate to make his process more acceptable, and in fact it's gone the other way and has become less acceptable, he said:

I think if we are going to look at the efficiencies of operating, there is no question that fewer alderman would be a tax saving to the people. You hear criticism that alderman are doing work that officials should be doing. If that's the case, if that's all they do, then maybe we can have fewer aldermen.

Now, Mr. Chairman, we have all agreed to increase representation in this legislature come the new electoral boundaries Bill, and that's right, because of the work-load and because of population increases. The population of the cities could increase quite considerably since the ward system was introduced in 1973. And the minister says, oh we need fewer alderman. Now he's talking out of both sides of his mouth.

What makes the people in the cities different? They want good government just like people anywhere else. They want good government like people anywhere else.

Now, Mr. Minister, your comments about in recent months that city councillors are not efficient, that they're motivated by all kinds of strange things, which is different than what you said in 1987, I submit to you you cannot

support or substantiate. And if you can, I welcome you to do so in these estimates today and give us the evidence. Don't just go out in front of a television camera and a microphone and make these wild statements and condemn our municipal officials. Back it up. If you can't back it up, then don't say it, because you're casting reflections that are not becoming a minister of the Crown.

If you have some integrity to do that, then I hope you will do so, and when I give you an opportunity throughout this day.

Now, Mr. Minister, all of the evidence points to the fact that the ward system is working, and working well, whether it's from the point of view of representation, whether it's from the point of view of effective municipal government. And they have their bad times just like your government has had its bad times. As a matter of fact, if you compare municipal governments to the operation of this provincial government, they are five-star operations.

I don't see many of them running up the kind of deficits that this provincial government has done, and it's not proposing to do away with provincial constituencies. Because really, the follow-up of your arguments, Mr. Minister, simply say if ward systems cause mismanagement, then provincial constituencies cause bad government provincially. How can you justify it in one case and not the other is beyond me.

Now we have tried for weeks, Mr. Minister, to get you to clarify your position because municipal elections are soon upon us.

Can you, in this House today, finally, once and for all . . . do you have your act together? Has your caucus been able to convince you the error of your ways? And are you able, in this House, to say that you now have changed your mind? And if you do, I will commend you for it. I may qualify it, but I'll commend you for it. Are you able to say that you've changed your mind because you've listened to the advice . . .

An Hon. Member: — You wouldn't commend me if I gave you good dog legislation.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Try me. Try me. But you've got good advice from all of the right people. Are you able to say in this House today that you're not going to proceed with changes to the municipal electoral system and destroy a very effective and good government system in our municipalities that we've experienced since 1973?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — I'm trying to be reasonable here today, Mr. Chairman, to facilitate a timely debate in this Committee of Finance. The ward system has nothing to do with it, so I will be brief. And the reason that I'll be brief is simply because there has been no announcement yet. I'm still listening; I'm still consulting. Everything is purely hypothetical that the member says.

You know, the debate on the ward system has been going on, certainly in my city, since 1914; that was even before

me. But the second one was '35, and that wasn't. Since 1959 — and I'll tell you what happened, Mr. Chairman — in 1959 the people of Regina voted "no" to the ward system; 1970, the people voted "no" to the ward system. He mentioned the word "dictatorial." After these two votes against the ward system, the NDP government put it in dictatorially.

And now they stand there, or sit, like some righteous group that says, don't do this, you have no right to dictatorially do that, when they did it. Then they said, and then we'll give you an option; if you don't like it, we'll remove it. So in 1976, three years following, the city of Saskatoon voted against it. And what happened? Nothing. The NDP still left it in.

He referred to a former cabinet minister doing research for me. Well I can tell you that he hasn't done his research. I, too, read that that occurred. And if in fact he did, you should consult with your business community, because if indeed that was done, and I have no privy to it, it was done on behalf of the Regina chamber of commerce, from the information that I read, from the publication that I receive as a member of the Regina chamber of commerce. So you should do some more research on it yourself.

And to degrade, to degrade the aldermen that run at large by calling them elitists, that tells me that every single, solitary alderman in the city of Moose Jaw who runs at large then is automatically an elitist. They're friends of mine, and as much as I admire them, I wouldn't degrade them by calling them an elitist.

If the provincial boundary constituency is beyond that member and others that chided in from their seats, if you can't understand the difference between a parliamentary system and the ward system, you shouldn't be here. Constituencies have nothing to do with wards. I happened to catch on the tube the member from Regina Victoria talking about the ward system and, again, full of misinformation.

And if we make an announcement to do something with the ward system, Mr. Chairman, I will be glad to debate the comments at that particular time in committee with my critic and with the member from Regina Victoria. Unfortunately, politics have been kept out of it until now — until now. And I happened to be one that agreed with the member from Riversdale, the Leader of the Opposition, when in 1973 he clearly indicated that it had nothing to do with politics and there was no room in the NDP for politics at the local level, and the like. And I happen to agree with that.

And politics is not the debate in the ward system. He said that I don't have support. Well let's analyse my non-support. In Saskatoon the city council voted six to five — five there obviously saw it my way. Moose Jaw, who have had the opportunity to go to the ward system and haven't. That's 10-0. So start counting them up and see about this so-called lack of support in the event the government should decide to do something.

But my, and our, concern — it extends to the city council to appoint — but our concern in all of this matter is for the

taxpayer. I have never, ever demeaned or taken a personal attack on any alderman or mayor in this province, in spite of the personal attacks that come my way, and I suppose that's understandable.

And as the member read from Hansard the glowing remarks that I had for my municipalities, and I still do, and he says, what's changed? — nothing has changed. I still firmly believe that they're doing a very good job under difficult times. And now if we can help them, if we can help them to do a better job that transfers into the taxpayers' laps, then why shouldn't we do that. And it's not the aldermen, Mr. Chairman. They're doing the best job that they can. It's the system; it's the system that hamstringing them, and there is absolutely no question that when a ward alderman is elected, his very first obligation is to the ward. It has to be. That's who he represents. That's who he is elected by.

So when you mention that you want to have the best possible system, the best possible democratic system, there is nobody in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that would like to have the best democratic system available to our municipalities.

And when you only have the opportunity to vote for one, for one of 10 members on a city council, that's not democracy to me. To only be able to sway the vote, one out of 10, and then if your ward alderman — for some reason or another you have a problem in your ward — the ward alderman doesn't see it your way, now where do you go? Where do you go? The other ward alderman wouldn't be interested, that's for sure.

So the observations that he quoted coming along towards the end of March were very interesting and there were reasons for those remarks, Mr. Chairman, and they related directly to the ward system. About that time our cities were coming in with new budgets. And I witnessed, here in my home city of Regina, something else that the ward system really, truly represented.

And we had a ward alderman that maintained that he could build two recreation centres in his ward for the price of one. Well, you can't. And if he gets two recreation centres, that means that something else was bumped and next year that something else will appear. And who's going to pay for all of these? The taxpayer, the taxpayer of Regina will be obligated to then pay for those two, plus whatever else was bumped.

And interestingly enough, as I watched city council develop their budget in Regina, they were extremely proud of the fact that they were able to hold the line and not have an increase — so proud, as a matter of fact, that they had to wait some two or three weeks to make it official till the media was present so that they could blow their horn. And I commend them for being able to do that.

But it begs this question, Mr. Chairman, that last year when our government had to deal with the revenue-sharing impact the way we did, there were hoot and hollers and cries and the fact that the city of Regina would go bankrupt practically, that there would be massive tax increases and mill rate increases and the like, because they simply couldn't afford to operate on that.

And we asked them to do what we did — analyse your budgets; go through your system; see where you can get some tax savings for the people, and like that.

So we saw a moderate tax increase last year from the city of Regina. And yet what happened this year? What happened this year when they get the same money? Nothing; there was no cry; there was no demand for more funds. And yet, maybe because it was a election year at the local level, all of these ward aldermen decided, well let's keep the mill rate frozen this year so that they can see how effectively we can deal with the ward system at the local level.

(1600)

Well, Mr. Chairman, I believe that if we can help the city alderman and the mayor operate more efficiently than they are now, more effectively than they are now, have more concern for the community as a whole, have more concern for the entire tax structure in our city, that we are obligated to do that. And as Minister of Urban Affairs, Mr. Chairman, my main role in that function is to try to assist the taxpayers of our urban municipalities.

I don't believe at this time, Mr. Chairman, that I will argue the ward system debate any longer this afternoon. It's all hypothetical. Until and when and if our government make a decision and makes an announcement on that matter, I would then of course be more than willing to debate at . . . (inaudible) . . . My main role in the function is to try to assist the taxpayers of . . . (inaudible) . . . on that matter. I would then of course be more than willing to debate at length the changes that we may choose to implement. But to argue it further this afternoon would serve no purpose.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, I'm sure that's what the minister would like, because he would like to just be the only voice saying what he wants to say without giving opportunity for anyone else including the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association or municipal councils or anyone else to have their say.

But I want to say to the minister that we have some more questions that we want to ask of you. Although you'd prefer not to be accountable, as you showed in the information you didn't give from 1986-87 estimates, we're going to ask you those questions. And you can choose not to answer them. That's your decision, and you'll be judged by that.

Mr. Minister, I thought it rather ironical that you began your comments by saying, never in your life have you attacked municipal government, never have you attacked municipal politicians or municipal councillors. And then in the end of your remark you went on an attack on municipal councillors.

You're starting to doublespeak again, just as you've done all the way through this issue. And whenever somebody questions your motivation, or whenever somebody questions your stated policy, instead of listening intelligently, you attack them.

Now, Mr. Minister, you made some comment about the

city of Regina not having a tax increase this year. Well that's commendable. Tells you that your arguments that the ward system creates inefficient government is a bunch of boloney. It just blows your argument out of the water. Were it that our government last year which hid its budget from April 1 until June 17 had paid some attention and followed that example, we wouldn't have had the disaster that we had from the point of view of budget making and communities and urban municipalities waiting for months for their funding because of your mistakes and because of your stupidity in policy making.

Now, Mr. Minister, how can you say that you've never attacked a municipality and municipal councillors when you are quoted in the *Star-Phoenix* of March 22, 1988 as follows:

I have been studying it for more than a year now, and it is not the most efficient way at all to operate a municipal government. The taxpayers now are really looking for the best bang for the taxpayers' dollars. They don't think they can get it when alderman come with a narrow focus, rather than what is best for the taxpayer.

How is that, Mr. Minister, not an attack on alderman who are elected in our municipal governments? Would you explain that please?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, I still stand by my remarks. I have never attacked, personally, a mayor or alderman; I attacked the system.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Are you saying, Mr. Minister, that when you say the alderman come with a narrow focus, that you're not attacking the alderman, no matter what system they got elected in? You saying they come with a narrow focus, isn't that an attack on them?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, it's the system. They have to come there with a narrow point of view.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Will you explain why they have to come there with a narrow point of view?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — If the member can't figure that out, I can't help him any more than that.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Minister, there you go again. You're saying that the alderman are inefficient; you're saying they're incompetent; you're saying that they don't provide efficient government even though municipal government has been a lot more efficient than you; you're saying they come with a narrow focus, and yet you're not prepared, once again, to back up your allegations, just like you have not been prepared to back up your statement on your intentions with the ward system. This is the history of your administration, and it's particularly the history of your tutorship or stewardship of this Urban Affairs department.

Now will you finally, Mr. Minister, do what's honourable. And instead of trying to go about the business of destroying, or trying to destroy the credibility of people who get honestly elected to our municipal governments, people who have the respect and the confidence of the

people who elected them, stand up in this House and tell us what is the evidence for the statements which you have made?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, again I repeat, it's the system. If we had a cross-country ski team that did very well under the circumstances, and you said that they did very well under the circumstances, and while the race was on, or after it was over, you found out that instead of wearing cross-country skis they were wearing snow-shoes, I'm sure that they would improve if they took the snow-shoes off and put cross-country skis on. It's the system.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, if it's the system that does it, can you . . . will you then say in this House that MLAs on that side of the House or this side of the House are elected in constituencies and therefore they have a narrow focus; that the Premier, who's elected from Estevan, has got a narrow focus?

Is it his narrow focus that's making him spend a billion dollars on the Rafferty-Alameda project, which no one can justify economically, and to which the federal . . . even the federal minister has said that the federal government can approve it, because there is insufficient information? Is it the narrow focus that's cause to do that?

Are you saying that rural municipal councillors, who get elected on the division system, the rural municipal school trustees, who get elected on the municipal . . . on a division system, are incompetent and narrow focused because it's not an election at large? Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, I've never called them incompetent. That's a word that he's inventing for my use, and if he thinks that they're incompetent, he can very well analyse my remarks as saying they're incompetent. And I'm sorry to hear him say that they are incompetent. I've never said that. I have simply said that the system is what beats them, as well intended as they are.

You know, he still can't understand the difference between a parliamentary system and the ward system, and yet he sits in this House and sat in it before, was a cabinet minister. We're elected here as a government, Mr. Chairman. We have the government on this side, the opposition on that side. And with that kind of an attitude, they're going to be there for a long, long, long, long time.

And there's a difference with how the system works. But to help you out a little bit, to help you out just a little bit, let's say that you had in this Assembly, rather than a government and an opposition and the discussions the way they work out, let's say that we had 20 parties of three seats each. Put them in here and see where you get to.

It doesn't work that way in the ward system. You know that. You have 10 independent alderman that sit around the table, that are not elected as a slate, that come there representing their ward. It's the system.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well let's talk about the system, Mr. Minister. This is a new phase for you, I must say. You must have read a political science book over the

weekend. Somehow it's now "the system," not those people who come with a narrow focus.

You said that if an individual in the city . . . or a municipality has a problem and goes to his ward alderman, and somehow the alderman does not handle it, that he's got nowhere to go.

I don't agree with you, but wouldn't you say that if . . . when most of the aldermen or alderwomen or councillors are elected from one part of the city, as used to be the case in Regina, that someone who's living in the core city of Regina who doesn't have a representation, where's that individual going to go? Where's that individual going to go? Don't you think that that individual is then disenfranchised with your system that you're proposing to impose instead of letting the people decide, even though in 1976 or '78 they did decide and said that they want the ward system? Don't you think that that individual then has got a greater problem, because he certainly doesn't have anywhere to go at all?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — That's the most ridiculous argument that I have ever heard, and the member from Regina North East has probably lived too long in Humboldt. I've lived in this city all my life and I'm very familiar with the operation, and if you think that Henry Baker lived in the south, you're mistaken. If you think that Wally Coates lived in the south, you're mistaken. And if you think that the member from Regina Victoria lived in the south, you're mistaken.

And as a result, don't try to convince the people of this city that when we were at large, everybody was elected from south of the creek — it's nonsense. And don't for one minute try to convince everybody in this province that all of the good aldermen in the city of Moose Jaw are elected from one particular area when they are elected at large. It's just sheer, utter nonsense, and I can't believe that the member from Regina North East would be that gullible to try on that ridiculous an argument.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Chairman, I want to say a few words about the ward system since the minister is so interested in the subject. I know he's got a one-man team studying the subject. I'm wondering where the minister's support comes from, because I see an editorial that occurred in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* May 17, "(and it's got the minister's name, that's the first word) flogging dead horse," and it goes on:

If Urban Affairs Minister (blank) doesn't know enough to abandon his one-man vendetta against the ward system, the Tory caucus should enlighten him.

Opposition to his (Klein's) obsession with outlawing wards is widespread. He doesn't even have solid support among business operators in the cities, the one urban sector the governing Conservatives still look to for loyalty.

Now this is the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* as recently as May 17, has this to say about you.

And why are you not getting support from the chambers

of commerce, Mr. Minister? Well I'll tell you why. Because you go to the chamber of commerce and you make speech to the chamber of commerce, and it reports it here on May 6, just before this editorial . . . a little while before this editorial occurred, and it mentions your name — "slams ward system."

And it's interesting, ironical, that the reporter is Gerry Klein, and he has this to say — the minister is speaking to the board of trade and he was telling them about the ward system; and then he gave an example, the minister gave an example, and I want you to hear this example:

If conditions warrant a school be closed, the ward alderman will argue to save it for the sake of his constituents.

Well what does the ward alderman have to do with a school being closed? Little, if anything. Little, if anything, because that's decided by the board of trustees on the board of education. It has nothing to do with the ward alderman. And that's why the *Star-Phoenix* and the board of trade have lost faith in the judgement of the minister.

The bottom line in this is that the minister says: "ward system is inefficient." Well, Mr. Minister, check the credit ratings. The city of Saskatoon credit rating surpasses your provincial government's credit rating by quite a bit, and the margin is getting wider — the margin's getting wider. And you have the nerve to stand up and say that it's because of the inefficiencies in city government. And the city of Saskatoon, all its alderman, must be offended by that kind of comment coming from the minister in Regina.

Now the city of Saskatoon was so concerned about this that they passed a motion. The minister stood here today and he said, the city of Saskatoon supports me. Well I just . . .

An Hon. Member: — I didn't say that.

Mr. Brockelbank: — And, Mr. Minister, if you check the record, you'll see you said that, because I listened very closely. Because any time that the city of Saskatoon supports you, I have to look at it very closely.

And what is the motion in the city of Saskatoon in council? The motion was on March 28, 1988:

That this city council indicate to the Minister of Urban Affairs and to the Premier its support of the ward system and its disapproval of any change to the present system of voting. Carried.

Carried by Saskatoon city council.

(1615)

The minister says his decision's coming soon. Today he's being reticent about coming forward with what his decision is. We're all sitting here waiting. What's the minister's decision about the ward system?

Well back on May 19 in the *Leader-Post* there's an article reporting, "Government still considering law to eliminate wards." It's a small article, and the last line is by the

minister, "A decision is likely by the end of the month, he said." Well today, Mr. Minister, is May 30; you've only got one more day. This is on May 19. Now the minister begins immediately to hedge, to hedge on the day.

Another article on questioning on the ward system, "The minister non-committal on wards." And this is May 27, just a few days ago, in the *Star-Phoenix*:

And it happens that SUMA head, Don Abel, said after the meeting that his group expressed 'quite plainly' (those remarks are in quotation; those words are in quotation) it's belief that the city should be allowed to keep the system. However (and the minister's name appears) said he questioned whether SUMA is the appropriate group to be lobbying for the system since it only affects two of its 511 member communities.

Well, Mr. Minister, if SUMA has no right to be meddling in this question, what are you meddling in it for? The city of Saskatoon didn't request you to meddle in it; the city of Regina didn't.

Now the minister can go back years and years, and he'll peddle something from years ago, but we want to bring the minister up to speed, bring him up to today. Regina has said they want to maintain the ward system. Saskatoon has said they want to maintain the ward system. Other cities have said they want to maintain the ward system. SUMA, the organization of the urban municipalities, has said, we want to maintain the ward system. The board of trade says, you don't know what you're talking about.

Now, Mr. Minister, it's getting shorter and shorter. Here today, in the *Leader-Post*, May 30, today: "Ward system decision coming soon."

Mr. Minister, could you end the suspense, please, end the suspense. Everyone's against you. You've run up the flag; nobody's saluted. Why don't you admit you were wrong? Withdraw your comments about the ward system. You can bring it up in five or 10 years, if you happen to be the government, which I doubt. But you can bring it up again and have it considered by this legislature, if there's some support for doing away with the ward system.

But, Mr. Minister, it's now up to the second-last day of the month. End the suspense. Tell us what your position is on the ward system. What is this government going to do? The end of May, by your own prediction, is the deadline. Let us know. Tomorrow's the last day.

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, the member of Saskatoon Westmount is simply not listening again. He says he listens very closely when I mention Saskatoon; I wish he would.

I explained that very resolution that you brought up, and it was six to five — six, five is what I said. So I said that five, obviously, didn't go along with that resolution. That indeed gives me some support.

You say that we're meddling. Well you sanctimonious bunch over there, who do you suppose meddled in 1973

when you arbitrarily imposed . . . and if and when necessary to get into this debate, I've got some interesting quotes from your new leader that we will bring up. Let's see what he said about meddling and the like. I'll get into the SUMA meeting also at the same time.

And they recognize that as an association they have no choice but to do what they did, in spite of the fact that it involves only two of their membership. I recognize that. I've explained that I respect their position as elected officials, but my concern is for the taxpayer. I'll get into the school closure debate later, if it's necessary. And as far as flogging a dead horse is concerned, I watched the Pimlico Stakes the other day and I saw a guy flog a horse, that had no chance, that came and won.

We have three decisions, if you wonder why, or three possible alternates to choose from, if you wonder why it's taking a little while to determine this. It is indeed, and I will grant you, a major decision. Three options are available to us. And if I'm wrong and I have to retract, I'd be the first one to do that.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Well, Mr. Minister, I think you should stay away from the race track, because your record's not too good.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Brockelbank: — I think, Mr. Chairman, the minister should stick to the analogy of the snow-shoes versus the skis because that's the one he was really trying to break ground there and we were beginning to understand his rationalizing processes.

The minister stands before us and says the vote was six to five in council, which gives him hope. Number one: that's grasping at straws, Mr. Minister. You were defeated in council and there was no recorded vote in council. It was a voice vote and the motion was carried by council by a voice vote, no recorded vote, therefore you have no justification to say the vote was six to five.

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Well all I can do, Mr. Chairman — there's no use in debating this at this time, but I can tell you that at a recent meeting with SUMA those were the figures that I was supplied with.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you. I want to make a few remarks, Mr. Chairman, with respect to the issue at hand. And I want to begin by saying that, Mr. Minister, yours must be a very lonely job, and I have a kind of admiration for the job that you've been undertaking with respect to the ward system if for no other reason than that you seem to be championing a cause that seems to have so little support within the province of Saskatchewan.

I remember a year ago, or two years ago, you raising that particular issue and raising it up the flag-pole, but no one was saluting it. But it doesn't seem to have stopped you from carrying on and persevering. So if I say there's some admiration, it's certainly not for the cause as such, but some admiration for the fact that, in the absence of any support, or with such little support you doggedly carry on.

And I would say that what you are doing, that the cause

that you are promoting, is very much out of step with the majority of opinion in the province, and certainly the majority of opinion in those cities that now have a ward system. And it would appear out of step with the majority of opinion from all urban municipalities, and not just the elected representatives in those municipalities but, I think, also the people in those municipalities.

And, I think, also out of step with the rest of the country. Most cities of the size of Regina or Saskatoon in Canada have a ward system as opposed to an at-large system. There is some exceptions to that, but not very many. Most cities have a ward system simply because they've found that it's the best way to run urban government, and probably find that it's the most efficient way to run urban government.

I note one exception, of course, of cities that do not have a ward system or division system is in British Columbia. But again that would seem to be the result of right-wing governments, Social Credit governments, not unlike right-wing Conservative governments in Saskatchewan that seem to take the position that as a provincial government they know what's best for people in urban centres. And, as in B.C., the situation seems to be a political response by a provincial government as opposed to giving the people in those urban centres the opportunity to develop for themselves a system that, they've found now throughout most of Canada, seems to work best for them.

You indicated earlier that you're still listening and consulting. And I'm pleased to hear that and I hope that you mean that seriously, and that it means something more than trying to find an isolated example of some small group or individual who might come to the fore to give you public support, and that it means that you're truly out there listening to the people of urban Saskatchewan about the ward system and why they like it and why they think it's effective.

And I hope that you talk to the people on the streets in Regina as opposed to coming to us with some comments by some business crony of yours or some other right-wing crony of yours who echoes your remarks — that you go out there on the streets of Regina to talk to the people of Regina or Saskatoon, to talk to them about why they support the ward system, and to find out from them why they think it's a good system.

Because whatever else you may think about the ward system, whatever else I may think about the ward system, I think it's very important for a government and for this whole Legislative Assembly to pay some heed to what it is that the people of the province are saying and thinking.

You might find, for example, Mr. Minister, that they clearly recognize what you say you're going to do, although you haven't quite formally announced it, what they see you as doing as being nothing more than a political exercise, an attempt to exercise raw political powers to suit your own partisan purposes. That's what they're seeing out there and that's what they're saying.

But you should talk to them about why they support the

ward system. I think this is important.

Personally I'm intrigued by the double standard that your government has. I'm intrigued by the dichotomy between a "ward system," and if I can put that in quotation marks, in rural municipalities as opposed to a ward system in our large urban systems. That you think that a ward system or division system is appropriate for rural municipalities but is somehow not appropriate for our large cities, even though, again, most cities in Canada of that size or larger have a ward system. I'm intrigued by that dichotomy.

And I asked some questions of the Minister of Rural Development when his estimates were up, about what he perceived to be the benefits of the division system in our rural municipalities. And he said, and rightfully so, that it means that a councillor who's elected from one division, chances are that he's going to be more familiar with the kinds of problems that exist within that particular division, and therefore at least one of the members of that council would be sensitive to the problems and the challenges that a particular area or division faces; and also so that that particular councillor could be in the position of attending to problems as they crop up.

And I understand, and rightfully so, that because of the absence of any bureaucracy to always do the work, that a division councillor in rural municipalities might in fact attend to problems before any staff resources can be put towards dealing with that particular problem.

But I ask you, I ask you, what is so different about our large cities, that the system is not an appropriate one there? And you know, Mr. Minister, as one that's lived in Regina for some years, as one large city in this province, that various areas of the city will have unique problems. I don't think that's any secret to people. Some areas of the city will have traffic problems, traffic problems that are not necessarily shared by other sections of the city.

But it's the cathedral area in Regina, where the council of the day seems to have come up with some imaginative and innovative — even if not supportable — solutions, or traffic problems in the ward that I represented, which were again unique to that area, requires, I think, unique responses. And it's not something that is readily understood by people in the rest of the city.

But the kind of unique traffic problem, or unique drainage problems which exist in parts of this city and really require that someone on the council understand fully what it is that's happening to drainage, say in a particular area, so that some proper direction can be given to the bureaucracy to begin to deal with those issues; or whether it's certain kinds of curbs in Whitmore Park, which are a unique problem; or whether it's the problem of prostitution in a city, which might become a unique problem for a certain area of the city; or whether it's certain planning and development issues, which may be unique to certain areas of the city, the point that I'm making is that there are unique problems for certain areas in our large cities.

(1630)

And how can people in our large cities hope to find a sympathetic, understanding ear in a system under which all members of council get elected at large and may not necessarily understand, or much less care about certain unique problems because their relationship with the voters doesn't necessarily depend always on dealing with some of those unique problems.

The people of Regina, and I would submit of other large cities in Saskatchewan, know that they can't find a sympathetic or understanding ear, or if they do it's an accident in an at-large system.

They know that too with the boards of education. I remember from my time on city council that if some issue cropped up with respect to education in the area that I represented, that more often than not I would receive phone calls from citizens to say, we have this problem with schools in our area with respect to the board of education, but I really don't know who to talk to; I don't really know on that board of education who is interested in my problem.

And they'd also know from experience, from many years ago when we had an at-large system, that more often than not that those were elected at large and were simply less than interested in local neighbourhood problems, local unique concerns, than is the case under ward system.

I would say that this was especially true for many parts of the city north of Wascana Creek in Regina, because no matter what you say, Mr. Minister, the great majority of those councils elected under the at-large system in Regina tended to come from south of the creek in Regina. And they had their own unique perspectives on what were the problems facing Regina, but they didn't necessarily coincide with the many neighbourhood concern and problems that people in Regina might have had north of the creek.

And I know that you protest that fact and you throw out the odd example of someone being elected under the at-large system who wasn't south of the creek. But I think that if you check the facts, and people have done so in the past, that you will find that the great majority of those who served on those councils elected under the at-large system, tended to be narrowly focused and tended to come from a small geographic area of the city. They weren't necessarily representative of the city in that fashion.

Mr. Minister, you talked about . . . you said, and I hope I got your remarks correctly, you said that if a person becomes elected under the at-large or under the ward system, their first obligation will be to the ward, and that that's somehow wrong.

You know, I agree that there's a strong interest if you're elected under the ward system, to pay attention to the problems of the people in that particular ward. And I think that's healthy. I think that's good. It means that at least one member of that city council will know what the problems and the challenges are in that area of the city, and which was one of the reasons that your former colleague, Tim Embury, was always so strongly in favour of the ward system. He said that it's very important that at least one

member of that council know and understand the problems and conditions in that particular area of the city that's served by an alderman, because under the at-large systems, some of those things might escape the attention of a council.

But I agree with you that there's a strong interest in wanting to understand and know the concerns and problems of our people in a ward. And I think that's right. I think that should be the case. But you somehow equate this, you somehow equate this that because a member of a council elected under the ward system is interested in the problems and concerns of the people in that ward, you somehow make this quantum leap in logic to saying that because that person's interested in what's happening in that ward, all of the council will somehow miraculously support that person and be able to, or will want to pour all kinds of money, and say resources, into dealing with those kinds of problems and concerns. Now that's a quantum leap in logic, Mr. Minister.

I tell you, from six years on Regina's city council, I didn't see very much to support that particular logical conclusion that you've been able to come to. I saw very many examples of pet projects that one particular alderman may have been championing for his particular ward being turned down by the others because they said, you're simply promoting it because it's parochial and it's in your best interests, but it's not necessarily in the best interest on the whole city; it doesn't necessarily meet the development plans that we put forward for the whole city; it doesn't necessarily meet the kind of budget that we struck to deal with all of the concerns in the city. And you may have that particular concern and you may see that as an appropriate response and you may see that as the appropriate solution. But I tell you, in terms of the objectives that we set for the whole city, we cannot support that. We cannot support that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — You make this quantum leap in logic that because one alderman wants something for his particular area or her particular ward, that somehow the whole rest of the council is going to support that. And I say the facts don't back you up. That simply isn't the case. You think that an alderman is going to get a park or a recreation centre simply because he represents that particular ward? I say not.

I say that a park or a recreation centre or back lane paving or any of the services that people in the city come to expect, are done on the basis of agreement between all of the alderman as to where the priorities are in the city and where those particular priorities should first be addressed. It's not a matter of one alderman saying, well I want this for my area and therefore I'm going to get it. That's not how the system works, you know.

And I see your ignorance of how councils operate very greatly at play today, when I listen to you talk about how cities work, because you simply don't have the experience. Because that's not how things work. It simply is not how things work.

The fact is that you have to be able to convince, you have

to be able to convince nine other alderman, each who represent a ward. You have to be able to convince the mayor. That is to say, in the case of Regina or Saskatoon, you have to be able to convince 10 other members of council that you should have something for your particular ward, no matter what the development plans may call for, no matter what the priorities of the city might be, that those things should be thrown out the window, and no matter what effect it has on them that somehow this should all go to a particular ward.

Well I think the situations are rare where that has occurred; where the aldermen from nine other areas would say, well, you know, I'm not too concerned about priorities from my ward or I'm not too concerned about the priorities for the city; you're such a good person, I want to give you all those things. But that's not how the system works. That's not how it works, my friend. And again your ignorance is showing.

The real reason, the real reason, Mr. Minister, that you're proceeding with this rather silly initiative of yours, the real reason is because you can't stand to see any kind of opposition in a major media centre in this province.

You know, in the ward system, the ward system — at least in Regina, the one that I'm most familiar with — the ward system has meant the election of men and women who are widely representative of the community, widely representative, as opposed to being narrowly focused and narrowly representative of aspects of the city.

Widely representative in the case of Regina means — surprise, surprise — people who do not necessarily tend to follow your provincial government blindly when it comes to anything and everything that you want to do. It means people who will oppose you when you have backwards-looking urban affairs policies. It means people who will oppose you when they see you doing things to urban centres that are detrimental to urban centres.

That should be no surprise, Mr. Minister, because the very great majority of people in this city do not support you, they do not support your PC right-wing government as you found out in the last election. They will not continue to support you, given this kind of stupid move on your part, and taking something away from them that obviously they value.

No, I think the real reason, Mr. Minister, that you want to do away with the ward system, because your government cannot stand to see any group at all that might be representative of a large number of people in this province. You can't stand to see any group opposing you when opposition is called for, and especially when that opposition occurs in a major media centre in this province. That's the thing you can't stand.

If there's any sort of history that comes loud and clear from your six years in office is that if there's opposition to what it is that you want to do as a government, your first response is not to listen — your first response is to crush that opposition and to find ways to get rid of that opposition. That's your record as a government. And it should come as no surprise, I suppose, to the people of

Regina that you would carry this further — do away with their ward system to see if you can't get some system which favours the well-to-do, which favours those that have the money to run at-large campaigns.

Mr. Minister, I frankly don't understand why you would take a system that has seen the elimination of civic voter parties, has seen the elimination of ... or the doing away with of organized political forces in our urban settings, and to go back to a system that in the past in Regina has meant the development of civic voter parties. I would venture to say that if you had the at-large system, that you will again see civic voter parties.

You will have, on the one hand, a voter party comprised of some of your right-wing friends and some of those in the chamber of commerce and the Regina Business Alliance, and others, who say: here's our response for Regina; here's our program for Regina; these are the things that we want to do. And finding out that because they're able to be better financed than others just might be able to again hoodwink the people of Regina, as your government was able to do in the last provincial election.

Mr. Minister, the real reasons for what you want to do, I think, are apparent to most people. I would strongly encourage you to do as you say, and that is to listen and to still consult with people about the ward system. I think that you will find that, notwithstanding the echoes that you get from some of your right-wing friends, that the great majority of people in Regina, in Saskatoon and, I think, in Prince Albert support the ward system because they see it as serving their interest, they see it as serving their needs. And I hope that you take that to heart and, again, listening to the people of those cities, as opposed to serving your own political ends and your own political needs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I didn't get much of a question there, and I got a speech on a hypothetical situation that they seem to be pretty worked up about. And he used the word intrigue, and it seems that it's pretty easy to intrigue the member from Regina Victoria I guess but, you know, part of his conversation ... I guess, if he's telling me that an alderman from a ward system, an ordinary lay person — he was talking about drainage — knows more about drainage than a professional engineer, well if that's his argument, then I suppose that's his argument. It's beyond belief how a layman would know more, but in any event ... then he tells me to stay in touch.

(1645)

Well I had lunch the other day at the Hungarian Club here in Regina, east side of this city, probably in the seat from the member for Regina Victoria, and as I was walking out, I bumped into a table that I suppose contained ... (inaudible interjection) ... I'll correct that. As I was walking out, you know, I happened to walk into a group of people that were sitting around this table, but to call this group of tradesmen that had their work boots and their tool belts and their coveralls on that stopped and entered into a conversation with me, at their, at their instigation, Mr. Chairman, about the ward system — to call them a group of elitists, they would probably be tickled pink, but they would probably wonder how they

got into that category. And then if my former colleague, to which he referred, agrees with the ward system, then I respect his opinion the same as I do others that hold the ward system in high regard, and I'll share that with them.

Not everything is bad about the ward system. I don't believe I've ever said that. There are some good things in the ward system, but there are also some very significant, blatant errors in it. You can't, you know, support a contemplated change simply because, I suppose, you know ... and I don't know, you know ...

Even before, against all arguments at the time — including the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, I might add — the NDP government imposed the ward system on the people of Saskatchewan and the major cities. They imposed it. Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* was not in favour of it, neither were the cities; so why now should the NDP support a change if this government decided to change it? They put in the ward system; it was their baby; they would like to have that maintained.

And then for him to make a nonsensical statement just about bordering on stupidity amazes me — when he believes in his mind that a council elected at large would not oppose the government of the day or that, for some reason or other, a council elected at large would favour the government of the day. Well that's a ridiculous statement. Moose Jaw's elected at large, and certainly we have our problems with Moose Jaw, as we do with all cities. And you know, to say that because you're from a ward system you're automatically going to oppose the government, is just a ridiculous statement.

But in any event, we're debating something here that is fictitious today, and I'll save further debate until if and when it's required.

Mr. Tchorzewski: Mr. Minister, I want to talk to you in a moment about "fictitious", and I think it'll be of some interest to members of this House and the public.

I want to, first of all, make it very clear, as I indicated to you before, that it was every intention of mine to complete these estimates today, providing that you provided the answers. You are saying to the taxpayers of this province and in this Assembly, you're not prepared to provide those answers, as if no decision had been made.

And earlier you said no decision had been made in this House and so therefore you weren't going to debate it. And then you were saying, if it happens or if it does not happen, you will have more to say about it. And I want you to keep in mind, and I want the members of this House, and I want you, Mr. Chairman, to keep in mind that that's what the minister said at the beginning of the discussion today- that no decision had been made.

Mr. Minister, I stand here to accuse you of hiding the facts again, of hiding the facts again. And as my colleague from Regina Victoria so clearly said, it's simply a matter of, if someone questions your government, your immediate approach is to attack and destroy — a very barbarian political way to operate. If somebody questions anything you say, or any policy of your government, you attack and you destroy.

This is a case here we have of a government attempting in every way possible to preserve itself in power, regardless of what anybody thinks or what the electorate may wish to do. And you do it, and you do it, I say to the member from Swift Current, by not telling the people the truth, and by every time there is any potential of people questioning, you try to cause fear so that they will not question. You threaten and you try to hurt and you try to destroy.

Now we've had cases of non-government organizations that questioned government policy — a very legitimate thing for any non-government organization to do. What's the purpose of having it, except to provide a service? And if there is something wrong with the policy of government, who can better advise government about what's wrong with it than the people on the front lines, the people who are working with those clients?

And you say to them, don't you dare. Don't you dare suggest that policy of government is wrong and it should be changed. And when they did, you either eliminated their funding or you cut their funding. You attacked and you tried to destroy, and in some cases you destroyed, because you will not accept the very fundamental aspect of democratic government which has to have within it room for criticism. When you do away with that, you no longer have democratic government.

And somehow you either fail to recognize that; or recognizing it, you go ahead anyway against all of that, and do what you want to try to preserve yourself in power at any cost. Now that's one example.

In the last session of this legislature your government introduced a new electoral boundaries Bill which sets you up with the opportunity to gerrymander provincial constituencies. You're not going to have anything to do with the majority of the people electing the government of this province if you can help it, and so you've got a Bill that replaces a perfectly adequate one that used to exist, and now you set yourself up to gerrymander constituencies.

And you will do it. You will do it because the only thing matters to you is power. And you will trample on anybody that you think is necessary to keep yourself there. And you will attack and you will destroy.

Now, Mr. Minister, you said earlier in this debate, and in these estimates, that you hadn't yet made a decision. Well you weren't very forthright in this House, I must say, on that. And that's why we're still here. And although I said earlier we were prepared to finish these estimates today, I'm not so sure any more, because as it . . . It so happens that this afternoon, Mr. Minister, you have given notice of first reading of a Bill to amend The Local Government Elections Act.

Now why weren't you able to stand up when we asked the questions and say that, instead of trying to mislead this House and mislead the public of Saskatchewan and say that you hadn't made up your mind? Will you explain that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, if I were going to deal

with the ward system, I would be amending The Urban Municipalities Act, not The Local Government Elections Act.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Very good, Mr. Minister. Then why have you moved first reading of a Bill to amend Urban Municipality Act, which is also on the order paper for tomorrow and yet at the same time saying you hadn't made up your mind. Now what's in that Bill, Mr. Minister? Will you discuss that now?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Because, Mr. Chairman, in The Urban Act that we're amending, it contains provisions for the store hour legislation and the dangerous dog legislation.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Is that all, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, once the Bill is introduced we'll see what's in it.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, if all of this . . . there's obviously no other legislation which is necessary to be amended for you to introduce changes to the ward system. It's either The Urban Municipality Act or it's The Local Government Election act — either one of those two.

Now are you able, since now it's on the order . . . going to be on the order table — you've given notice today — are you able to say in this House that you are going to leave the ward system intact, or are you proposing amendments to change it?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, in The Local Government Election Act we're dealing with such things as mobile polls for the handicapped, we're dealing with such things as student votes, dealing with such things as residency.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — And you're not dealing with the ward system — is that true?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, if we deal with the ward system, we will have to amend the urban Act and we will also have to amend The Local Government Election Act.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Yes, I agree. I knew that when I started my questioning, Mr. Minister, and you obviously have now discovered that from your officials now.

Since you have both of those Acts in here, can you tell the House whether in that legislation we're going to see some amendments to change the ward system to a different system?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — I suppose, Mr. Chairman, once the Acts are opened up, if we decide to deal with the ward system, they'll be right there and an amendment can be made to them.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now, Mr. Minister, since you were prepared to say that what is in The Urban Municipality Act — changes to the store hours — and since you were prepared to say that some of the things in The Local Government Election Act is to do with voting, why aren't you prepared to also say whether there's going to be some

changes to the ward system?

What makes that different? What makes it different, other than some motivation of yours, some secretive approach to this issue that you don't want the public to be able to discuss it after they know what your decision has been? What makes that different?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, once the government makes the decision on the ward system, there will be a lot of time, and ample time, for discussion and debate.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — So can you then say that you have not made a decision?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, the government will make the announcement when the decisions have been made.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — The only thing one can conclude from your comment is that a decision has been made. That's going to be on the record.

Now, Mr. Minister, you are on record as saying that in order to make any changes to the electoral system in municipalities, which means changes to the ward system, you would have to announce that before the end of this month. Does that mean you're going to announce it tomorrow, because that's the end of the month?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, I didn't say that I had to make the announcement. I said that if the government changes the boundaries, or changes the ward system, pardon me, I would like to be in a position to make the announcement tomorrow.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well I disagree with you, Mr. Minister. In the newspaper article that the member from Saskatoon read, you said you were going to make that decision and you were going to let the public know. And in the speech that the Premier made last week, he also said that that decision would be made and announced by the end of this month.

Now are you saying that all of those statements, which you have made publicly and which your Premier has made publicly, mean nothing and that you will not stand up to those statements and announce that's what you're going to do by tomorrow, at the latest, because that's the end of the month?

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Mr. Chairman, if indeed we make the announcement tomorrow, and if indeed I'm flogging a dead horse, why are they pushing for the ward debate today when I'm trying to co-operate to finish these estimates. I supplied all the information that they were asking for with regard travel, with regard staff, with regard all the typical questions. We had some discussion concerning mill rates and revenue sharing and the like.

For an hour and a half now we have been dealing with a topic that has not yet been announced. We will have ample opportunity to do that and debate it in this House if indeed the announcement is made.

So I stand accused now of delaying the tactics of my

estimates. I'm fully prepared to discuss my estimates. I'm fully prepared to end this Committee of Finance. And I'm fully prepared to deal with the ward system, if and when that announcement has been made. So if there's any delay, for the last hour and a half they have been on a conversation of something that's hypothetical at this moment.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Minister, if it's hypothetical it's only because you make it so. You have been making announcements since February. You have stated from time to time, quite clearly, that it was your intention to change the electoral system in municipal government. You can't deny that because it's on the record. You have made the announcement.

All we're asking you now . . . now you've qualified since then, because I think your caucus, from time to time, maybe does get after your hide a little bit. And after having made your announcement, I think you found out that shooting off your mouth before your brain locks in sometimes gets you into trouble.

Now, Mr. Minister, I'm not necessarily wanting to debate the ward system. If you're going to have legislation, we'll debate it then. We may ask you some more questions on this.

But all I want you to say is, are you going to change the ward system or are you not? If you're not going to change it, end of issue. I will stand up and say what a great fellow you are, on this issue only — on this issue only and on the golf course, maybe. But I'm telling you that that's something you ought to be prepared to say to the municipal people of Saskatchewan and to the ratepayers of urban municipalities so that they know.

Because if you're prepared, if you're going to play this kind of game with urban voters, what's next? Does this mean, if you get away with it, that your next move is going to be abolish the division system in rural municipalities? I say that's the case. That's the case.

(1700)

Because then there is nothing, because that means there is nothing you're not prepared to tear down and destroy. That is the record of your government. It has been the record of your government. And you're reinforcing it with your attitude here today, and your inability or your refusal to answer the questions on the ward system.

And it really simply says to everybody else in Saskatchewan, you may be next. You may be next and you better watch out. And if you as much as question one single policy of this government, you are then being threatened by that minister and by the Premier and that whole Executive Council, because they care not for the feelings of Saskatchewan people. They only care for their high-living life-styles and all of the perks that they and their friends can get out of being in government. And damn the torpedoes.

Mr. Chairman, it is 5 o'clock, and so I would like to call it 5 o'clock so we can pursue this some more at 7.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.