

June 14, 1988

EVENING SITTING

MOTIONS

Resolution No. 7 – Changes in Canada Post Affecting Towns and Villages (continued)

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

It is my intention to speak about the closure of rural post offices tonight. I'm very proud to be seconding the motion moved by the member for Prince Albert-Duck Lake:

That this Assembly communicate to the Parliament of Canada that it sees the closure or privatization of small post offices across Canada as seriously undermining the economic and social well-being of rural communities, placing hardships on seniors and physically disabled citizens and threatening thousands of rural jobs, many of them currently held by women; and further, that this Assembly urge that rural post offices continue to be federally owned and operated institutions maintaining a permanent presence in Canadian towns and villages.

Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to outline just how the closure is serious, how it is affecting people of rural Saskatchewan in particular, some of those people coming from the area that I was originally brought up in. And why I say that is, I see in the latest list of closures that the neighbouring town of Demaine is slated to lose its post office. Indeed, it may already have lost it. This list of closures includes many, many towns. I'm not going to list them, but there's about 20 on this page and 20 on this page, places like Dollard, Elstow, Forget, Hepburn, Lafleche, Leslie, Lewvan, Middle Lake, Redvers, Scotsguard, Spiritwood, Springwater, Vonda, Zelma, Clavet, Brownlee — there's four pages of closures. I just read some of them at random. The point is, there has been quite a number of closures already. I understand that in Saskatchewan we've had 54 rural post offices closed — 54 out of 620.

Mr. Speaker, I can draw an analogy to purchasing a vehicle that's new to you. You see a vehicle on a sales lot, and you think, my, that's the first time I've seen that particular car — what a beautiful car — and you buy it. And then on the way home you meet four more cars identical — identical — to that one, so suddenly there's five cars like that. And it's going to be the same thing in rural Saskatchewan regarding post offices.

There are people in 54 communities that already know and are feeling and experiencing what it is that my colleague from Prince Albert-Duck Lake spoke of earlier and what I am now speaking of. People from 54 communities are feeling that, and there's many, many more that are going to experience it because, as I understand it, in Saskatchewan, there's 39 more that are under review and slated for closure before the end of next year — another 39 out of 620 post offices in Saskatchewan. That's going to be close to 15 per cent of our post offices closed by the end of next year, and then the Canada Post goes on and talks about closing a total of

5,221 post offices across Canada by the year 1996. We are going to have a post office system that is going to be unrecognizable from what it is today, totally unrecognizable, and it's going to be much to the detriment of the people of, particularly, rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, if I get registered mail in Regina, I get a . . . the mail comes right to my door; I sign a little note agreeing that I've gotten the letter. If there's nobody home, then I have to go to the post office. If there's nobody at my house to sign for the registered mail, then they leave a card in my mailbox, and I have to go to the nearest sub post office, which, in my case, is a matter of 10 blocks. For people in rural Saskatchewan, it's not 10 blocks; for many of them it's not 10 miles; for many of them we're talking 20, 30, 40 kilometres one way to the post office, particularly after we see the continued closure of rural post offices. Now this is going to be a very severe hardship.

The best way I can outline that is: I have received some registered mail that, frankly, I don't know why anybody bothered to register it. It is almost a nuisance for me to have to open it at times, but, of course, the sender thinks it's important. Picture me 40 or 50 kilometres from the nearest post office, and Canada Post drops this registered note in my super mail box, and I'm thinking, gee, maybe, maybe my long lost aunt or uncle decided he wanted to leave me a thousand dollars. So I drive 40 or 50 kilometres to the post office only to find out essentially what I've got is registered junk mail, or worse yet, maybe it's bad news.

The hardship is going to clearly be there and it shouldn't be. Rural Saskatchewan people are not second class citizens. Indeed many of us in the city originated out in rural Saskatchewan and many of us are fond of remembering the towns and the villages and the hamlets and the farms that we grew up in and on. We bring some of the values of rural Saskatchewan with us here to this Legislative Assembly, and it also prompts, in my case, me to stand up and speak out on behalf of rural post offices.

People in my original home town where I grew up, many farmers chose to retire in that town. Some of them have built beautiful houses. Indeed, a couple of houses come to mind that I would quite happily trade my residence here in Regina for — really nice houses. But they made a conscious decision that said . . . they said to themselves they had farmed in that community, in that area, all of their lives. They knew everybody in the community. They felt good about their neighbours. They knew that in small town Saskatchewan, people look out for each other, and they knew they could count on Canada Post being there. They knew their post office was safe; they knew their hospital was safe. Both of those things are very much in question right now in my original home town — both matters very much in question, and it's a shame because the people of that community deserve much, much better. They thought they were getting much better, and they have been sorely let down.

In addition to seniors requiring the use of post offices that are fairly handy, fairly close, we have physically disabled

people that now have a choice of staying in their community rather than having to move into the city. But with the closure of our post offices, it's one more nail in the coffin of small towns and small villages and hamlets throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And that's a shame. That's a shame because . . . Not that we don't welcome people into the cities of Regina and Saskatoon and the other cities of our province. Of course we welcome people in, but we want them to come here because they see the city as a good place to live, not because we've driven them away from their small towns and their hamlets, not because we've driven them away. We want them to come here by choice. We want them to be happy here, and indeed, we want to extend them services here. We also should be extending those services throughout rural Saskatchewan.

In the motion we talk about jobs, many, many jobs about to be lost. And I find in preparing for this, a note that 83 per cent of the postmasters in Saskatchewan are women — 83 per cent. Those are the very people that are going to lose their jobs that are starting. They pay them now \$12.44 an hour, Canada Post pays postmasters. Those folks are going to be out of work, and when the post office is closed or privatized, whatever the alternative, some of those people may find jobs.

I defy you, Mr. Speaker, or any of the government members opposite, to find a clerk in a store that is making \$12.44 an hour. They're very, very far and few between. And in every case you can bet your bottom dollar that they're the son or daughter or somehow or else other related to the owner. And I comment those people for being able to get that kind of a salary. I think it's great, but there's not very many people working in drug stores, working in small grocery stores, working in hardware stores throughout Saskatchewan that are commanding \$12.44 an hour.

So what we're going to do by closing rural post offices is create a job ghetto: 83 per cent of the postmasters . . . or postmistresses are women — 83 per cent. We're going to abolish their good paying jobs, and we're going to say, well look, some of you may find work in the local hardware store or the local grocery store or the local drug store, and that work will be at 4.50 or \$5 an hour. So we're creating a job ghetto primarily for women — women, Mr. Speaker, that currently are earning something in the neighbourhood of 60 per cent of what men are. And here we have Conservative governments federally and Conservative governments provincially applauding it — not just applauding it, but, Mr. Speaker, urging it, pushing it, advancing it, saying, yes, let's create another job ghetto for women. Let's do away with it. We can't have these postmistresses making good money.

One further point regarding the \$12.44 an hour that postmasters and postmistresses start at, that is, these people live in the communities. They live in the communities where their post offices are. They spend most of their money in those communities. That helps the local grocery store, that helps the local drug store, that help in cases where there still is an automobile dealership, that helps that. It also help keep the local hospital open because when you're residing in a community, the first place you go for health care is the

nearest hospital. You don't drive 200 kilometres or further just to get to the city to see another doctor. If you've got a doctor in your local community, that's where you go when you've got the flu, that's where you go for your illnesses.

So by doing away with these jobs, we are in fact putting another nail in the coffin of rural Saskatchewan. Small towns and hamlets in Saskatchewan are declining at a rate . . . The population has been declining for over half a decade now at a rate of 9 per cent per year. So if you have a village with 200 people this year, if it is statistically with the normal, next year you're going to have 192 people; and the year after that, you'll have 183 people; and the year after that, 174 or 75 people; and the year after that, 160-something. And it doesn't take very long and those communities just dry up and blow away like the land was just before our recent rain here. We've seen it in my travels throughout Saskatchewan. I have seen where there used to be communities — nothing, nothing at all. It's sad because it seems to be escalating under this administration, Mr. Speaker.

(1915)

I want to point out that I am not advocating that we should be taking away mail services from urban people; that's not what I'm advocating at all. I am simply standing up and saying rural citizens are at least as valuable, are equally valuable with their city cousins, their city brothers and sisters. People in rural Saskatchewan deserve good service as much as possible.

When Saskatchewan joined confederation in 1905, we expected certain things to be provided by the federal government. One of those things was a communication network that would bind Canada together, would keep Canadians from coast to coast able to communicate with each other, with businesses. Indeed Eaton's operated its mail order business for many, many years, and they did it on the Canada Post system. They did not do it on a system that required rural people to drive 50 kilometres one way to the nearest post office. They did it on a rural postal system where post offices were almost always within 20 kilometres and in many, many cases much closer than that.

Mr. Speaker, I see in the *Leader-Post* of Saturday, May 28, "Canada Post 'wounding small towns'" is the headline, and wounding small towns. "Canada Post's plans," the article says:

Canada Post's plans to close or privatize 5,000 small post offices (and this) will wound rural communities and are unnecessary in view of the Crown corporation's expected profit of \$26 million this fiscal year . . .

Leroy Kuan, president of the Saskatchewan branch of the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association (CPAA), said his union was concerned with the impact on jobs and job opportunities for its members.

He goes on:

“Saskatchewan is probably (one of) the hardest hit provinces in Canada”

Of the 620 post offices in Saskatchewan 54 have already been closed and 39 more are under review . . .

This, Mr. Speaker, is precisely why the motion has been brought before this Assembly; it is precisely why we have Rural Dignity crossing Saskatchewan, getting people's awareness of the situation elevated, because in this day and age, if people aren't aware, before they know it, their post office, their local post office is closed, it is gone, and it is too late.

How do you tell the Postmaster General in Ottawa that you want your post office back after it's already closed, the windows are boarded, the doors boarded shut? It is too late then, Mr. Speaker. Nothing short of a miracle would bring those post offices back. That is why this motion today . . . That's why we have raised this issue repeatedly in this Legislative Assembly because members on this side of the House feel very strongly that rural Saskatchewan deserves to be equal and they deserve to have their rural post offices.

Another article, again in the *Leader-Post*, this time June 3, and the headline says, “Province's postal concerns said quelled.” Isn't that interesting — quelled. In other words, Canada Post came out, did a little sell job, did a little con job, said, oh don't worry, we've done all the damage we're going to do. Nice soothing words, but it isn't going to help in the 39 communities that are slated for post office closure within the next 12 months and the many hundreds more slated for closure between now and 1996 if the Conservative government federally and its cohorts provincially get their way.

Mr. Speaker, on May 18, Saskatchewan MLAs voted unanimously, meaning members on this side of the House and members on that side of the House, everyone, voted for our resolution, an NDP resolution, opposing rural post office closures because of the “negative social and economic impact of the closures.” The minister responsible who voted for the resolution, along with other Progressive Conservative MLAs, told the legislature “post offices are very important to rural communities and must be maintained.”

He then went on and, indeed, had met with Canada Post, and he is quoted in this article as saying, “If they do what they say they're going to do, postal service should even improve in rural Saskatchewan.” Well I don't know what in the world that member is dreaming about when he thinks that closing an additional 39 post offices is going to improve any, in any way, shape, or form, improve the service in rural Saskatchewan, indeed through this list, I'm not sure whether Briercrest was in that member's riding, but I see it's on this list. I suspect if I went through the four-page, 70 or 80 rural post offices that are being closed, I could find several in that particular member's riding alone, and he has the audacity to say that rural postal service is going to be improved. I just don't know how he can stand up with any hope of being credible and say that postal service is going to be improved.

And part of why we are so upset about it is . . . that I have another newspaper clipping, this time from *The Globe and Mail* from June 11, and the headline in this one says, “Tory cash missions soar higher than polls.” And it outlines, Mr. Speaker, how in Calgary, Agriculture Minister Wise swooped in with a \$12 million drought relief package. It's a welcome package; indeed we've said it's not enough. They got \$12 million for drought. Health Minister Jake Epp, in Ottawa, announced \$40 million to combat family violence, and then flew to Winnipeg late the same day and he announced \$129 million — \$129 million — for advertising, education, and research into AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) — very serious matter, no question about that, but \$129 million for that.

Then (the article goes on) the Gallup poll damaged the Tories by showing them 10 points lower than the month before in Quebec.

Ten points lower! They must be nearing the bottom of the slide. If they get much lower, they're going to be below the ground surface.

In response, (the article says, Mr. Speaker, it says) Mr. Mulroney hurriedly bumped Industry, Science and Technology Minister Robert de Côté from the command post, to personally deliver \$515-million to Quebec City for a \$970-million federal-provincial regional development fund for the province.

So over half a billion dollars just like that, because the federal government happens to drop 10 more points in the polls. Half a billion dollars for Quebec, just like that!

And what do they do for the rural post offices? They secretly make plans, they devise plans for closing 5,221 rural post offices across the land. What a mistaken priority!

The Conservative government federally and its counterparts provincially all seem intent on following the same blind ideology. They've closed the government offices, shut them down completely, privatize, privatize — doesn't matter what service is offered, let's save a nickel here and a dime there — and people don't really count, unless you happen to be in Quebec where, as you know, there is a huge number of seats, a huge number of seats. We have a federal government that is nearing the end of its four-year mandate; indeed it's nearing the end of its mandate that it will ever get, and now they're desperate to pump up some support so they got over half a billion dollars, just like that, for Quebec — nothing for post office.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the plans to close rural post offices have been devised, not originating in Canada Post. They've originated in the federal government caucus office. The plans were submitted . . . the plan was tabled in the House of Commons last November. It was a plan that, as I mentioned, was conceived behind the closed doors of the Conservatives, and it was imposed upon Canadians, rammed down our throats.

This federal government is so completely insensitive to rural Canada and it has refused to see the implications that this plan has for rural Saskatchewan. They fail to understand, Mr. Speaker, that the rural post office in many, many instances is the hub of our small communities. I can remember long before I went to school, going to town and one of the stops was to pick up the mail. And that was always an amazing sight to see, as my mother or my father would stick the key in the post office box, open it up, and there'd be somebody talking from behind the boxes. I couldn't figure out what it was, and there would be this conversation going back and forth. I was probably five or six years old before I realized that indeed there was a postmistress behind that wall of post office boxes. I thought it was magic — you just opened it up and people started talking.

But we found out how neighbours from the other side of town were doing. We were 20 miles one way from town, and we found out about neighbours on the other side of town and all around our community at the rural post office. That hub of rural communities, Mr. Speaker, is what makes rural postal service tick; it's what makes it work. That has to stay if we want to maintain service for our rural cousins, our rural brothers and sisters.

I had spoken about the 83 per cent of the postmasters and postmistresses in rural Canada that are, in fact, women. There are, indeed, Mr. Speaker, 9,000 postmasters and postmistresses who will lose their jobs in the next 10 years alone under this scheme — 9,000 of them out of work. That is a present from a government that was elected in 1984. We all remember the slogan — jobs, jobs, jobs. All we have seen is jaws, jaws, jaws, and very little jobs, very few jobs for Canadians, and now they want to put 9,000 more hard-working men and women out of work.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: They go on, Mr. Speaker. Canada Post has said, for instance:

that no closure of a rural post office, or change in postal service, (would) be undertaken without meaningful consultation and the consent of the community affected.

Well I defy them to tell us that the people in Aylesbury, or the people in any of the other total of 54 rural communities in Saskatchewan that have lost their post office . . . Name me one of those communities where the community said: yes, close our post office; we didn't use it anyway; it was just a nuisance; you know, my son from the city used to write once in a while, or my daughter from Toronto used to write once in a while; it was just a nuisance picking up the mail, and I'd get *The Western Producer* every week — well you know that paper is hardly worth reading. I don't think people are saying that, Mr. Speaker.

(1930)

I think that the people in those 54 communities are saying: we want our post office back; we want to be first-class citizens, the same, treated on an equal basis with everybody in the province, indeed everybody in

Canada; we don't want any more than everybody else, but we don't want anything less. And they have a right to think that way. I'd be disappointed if they didn't.

The consultation, Mr. Speaker, has not happened. The minister responsible for Canada Post in the federal government, Harvie Andre, "chose not to touch on this recommendation in his response to the committee." Canada Post, as I mentioned, is going ahead with its plans to close rural post offices, I've said before there's over 100 are slated for closure by early in the new year — that's across Canada — and in 10 years, the rural post office will no longer exist. That's, Mr. Speaker, if Canada Post and the federal government, with the help of its provincial counterparts here in Saskatchewan, allow this plan to go ahead. That's what this debate is all about. It's about rural post offices. It's about people — not just the walls of the post office, but the communities that Canada Post is serving throughout Saskatchewan.

Let's put a stop to these insane closures of our rural post offices right here in Saskatchewan. We can do our friends all across Canada a huge favour just by sending a clear, unequivocal message that our post offices are not for closure. They're not for sale. We want the service that we have expected ever since confederation, and indeed in the communication age it's probably more important now than ever before that we have that Canada Post system and that it be a viable one.

Mr. Speaker, I got a letter from Canada Post. Interestingly enough, it's from Ottawa, Ontario, and it's also from Donald H. Lander, who is president of Canada Post Corporation — he signs it. But it's interesting what Mr. Lander, from Ottawa, has to tell us in Saskatchewan about post offices. He was talking in the letter about, we've probably been approached by some crazy and insane people. He did not name them but I suspect he was talking about the Rural Dignity folks. And he comments about, we've probably been approached to speak up for Canada Post, speak up for service, and all those things. And he says, I want to give you the real story the way it really is. Well here he is, from Ontario, telling us in Saskatchewan how the post office affects us on a personal basis. Well I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but I have never seen Mr. Lander in Saskatchewan, much less in rural Saskatchewan. He may have been, but certainly doesn't make it a practice.

He says in the letter, and I quote:

These businesses are already established within communities and open longer hours than outlets we staff ourselves. This gives them additional products to sell and provides an extra source of income. By encouraging local shopping, it contributes to the local economy.

Well at first blush, perhaps there's some reason to that. But when you look at it and start to see what they are saying, they're saying we're going to move the post office from the current post office building and into a store, into a business where they've already got people employed. Now those folks, those businesses are going to sell stamps. The business that bids the lowest price is going to get it, is going to get the post office. They're going to have

the business. They have agreed to sell the stamps for the lowest amount of remuneration — the lowest commission is the word I was looking for, Mr. Speaker. They will become commissioned agents for Canada Post, and the lowest bidder will get the job.

How can you . . . In a small community where the volume of stamps sold is not going to be as big as it would be, say, in Regina or Saskatoon or one of our other major cities in Saskatchewan, how can you possibly pay \$12.44 an hour for someone to look after the post office under this circumstance that I have outlined? And that's going to be \$12.44 per hour that that local community and that business, indeed, is going to lose. Instead of the local hardware store having the postmaster coming and spending some of his or her money in that local store, the postmaster is already going to be working there, but for much less money than they currently are; they're going to have less disposable income. So it clearly does not contribute to the local economy.

The letter goes on and says:

When proposing any change in service in any community, we introduce our plans and give municipal officials and local customers at least ninety days in which to express their preferences and concerns.

Probably this is an accurate statement. But where it stops short is it says . . . it does not say, and we respond to these local concerns and these local preferences. They don't respond at all. They just give you 90 days to blow off a little bit of wind before they close your rural post office, 90 days to elevate your blood pressure. But the end result is there, totally there — closure of a post office; loss of jobs, as I pointed out earlier in my speech, a loss of over 9,000 jobs throughout Canada — 9,000 jobs, 9,000 good jobs, I might add, and the driving of many people into a job ghetto.

And here we have Canada Post, letter from Ottawa telling us about our rural post offices. I think it's just a shame, Mr. Speaker. I think that this Assembly has got to approve this particular motion. I think it is the only fair and honest thing we can do for rural Saskatchewan, and I challenge the members opposite to stand up, speak in favour of this motion, and send the message to Ottawa — send them the message that our rural post offices are not for sale, they're not for closure.

We demand, expect, and will get continued service throughout Saskatchewan. Whether it be in a small hamlet, or whether it be in one of our major cities, the service should be as reasonably close to the same as is humanly possible. That is what we should be expecting, Mr. Speaker, and that's indeed what we want.

There is a letter that my colleague from Prince Albert-Duck Lake spoke of in his speech, and it's from the Archdiocese of Regina — very interesting in that it starts off saying:

I have recently been made even more aware of the effect the closure of rural post offices has had on communities. In Saskatchewan the plan is for the

closure of 645 post offices, with a job loss of 1,032.

One thousand, thirty-two. It's not a number, Mr. Speaker, that's 1,032 jobs. At a time when we desperately need to be putting people to work, Canada Post is putting people out of work — Canada Post, led by our Harvie Andre, minister responsible, and given the support, I will add, of the members here in this government, the members opposite of the government. Certainly, they're not getting support from members on this side of the House.

What this job loss adds to this potential 1,032 jobs in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, it adds to the growing list. I have article from the *Star-Phoenix* that the headline is, "26 more workers in city purged in plant cutback." This article goes on to list the job losses in Saskatchewan that these Canada Post job losses are going to add to, and this is just Saskatoon alone, and it says:

July 1986, 45 Domtar workers laid off; October 1986, 34 at Northern Telecom; March 1987, seven at Joytec; May 1987, 74 instructors at Kelsey Institute; June 1987, 16 Norcan Air employees; July 1987, 30 at Develcon; September 1987, 63 Dominion grocery store workers; November 1987, 18 at Redi-Mix's pre-cast operation; February 1988, three more at Joytec; May 1988, 88 Domtar workers; May 1988, 26 at Develcon; May 1988, 200 Cory potash mine employees.

Mr. Speaker, what a sad litany; what a sad list; what a damnation of this government's actions. And now they want to go on and support a further 1,032 jobs across rural Saskatchewan, disappearing as the Canada Post office closes. It just defies logic, Mr. Speaker. Who's going to be left to pay the taxes? Everybody's going to be unemployed.

People want an opportunity to work. They want to contribute to our society — people right throughout the province. Saskatchewan has a history of proud, industrious, hard-working people wanting to make things happen, wanting to make our province a better place. Indeed that's what motivates us to be here. We want to leave Saskatchewan a better place at the end of the day than it was when we entered.

Mr. Speaker, the list of people losing jobs is a terrible, terrible thing, and it's not just numbers. When we talk about 200 employees at Cory potash mine, we're talking about 200 families immediately affected by a loss of their major pay cheque — 200 families. How many children going to school? How many children that preciously, when they'd go to school, they'd be talking to the child in the next seat: what's your daddy do? Oh my daddy's a miner, and they'd be very proud of it. Now the child in the next seat says: what's your daddy do? The kid mumbles, because how do you tell a child in the seat next door, next to you, that your daddy is unemployed or your mommy is unemployed? How do you do that in a society where all too often we put too much importance on what a person does for a living?

We judge people by their occupation, we judge them by their income, far too often. We should not be doing it, but the reality in 1988 is all too often that's how we judge people. When we meet somebody: what do you do? You know, when you're not at a party? And they'll say: I'm a student, I'm a nurse, or I'm a doctor, or I work for the city. Oh what do you do for the city? Well, I work in public works, and then that generates a conversation.

Here we have a plan to eliminate more than 1,000 jobs in Saskatchewan and a government that is saying, good, is saying, go for it.

The post office, Mr. Speaker, is the heart of our small communities. And I want to read a quote from a Ray Morrison of Dominion, Nova Scotia. His quote is:

It may be that the heads of Canada reside in the larger centres, but for sure the heart of what makes Canada work as a nation resides in places like this. We will continue to fight . . . until we win or can fight no longer. But if we lose, Canada will be a much weaker nation, with a broken heart, and that is truly very, very sad.

The quote from Ray Morrison of Dominion, Nova Scotia, the post office to be closed in early June 1988.

(1945)

And just to outline some of what I have said about the Canada Post, the rural post offices, Canada Post corporate plans call for the privatization, amalgamation, or closure of all of Canada's 5,221 rural and small community post offices over the next 10 years. That's what this is all about. More than 200 have already been closed or privatized. In Saskatchewan alone, there's been 54 post offices closed and that was before the Canada Post plan was okayed by parliament, before it was approved by the House of Commons. And right now we've got 52 post offices in Saskatchewan and 49 in Ontario that are under review by Canada Post and there are, of course, many, many more post offices under review in other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, as we are about to vote on this particular motion, I urge the members opposite to consider this. Just think about the people at Glenburnie, Ontario and Head of St. Margarets Bay in Nova Scotia, amongst some of the others, and ask them about their experience with Canada Post's closure and privatization, because the equal or better service that Canada Post proudly brags about, proudly talks about in its advertising, equal or better service usually for those folks means that the mail will get delivered to an outdoor green box or a super mail box while counter service for stamps, money orders, and so on are transferred from the post office to a local store. That's if there is a local store that agrees to take them. If not, the service simply moves to the next town. And in the meantime, the postmaster's job is lost for ever, and that job is lost for ever to that community. And that is happening all too often.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read a resolution from the 1988 convention of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, dealing with this very issue. And as I'm reading it, members can be assured it was passed. It's not

a motion that was put forward and then defeated. This motion was passed. It says:

Whereas page 4 of appendix 2 to the Canada Post Corporation business plan for the period of 1986 to 1991 states that 3,500 rural post offices will be turned over to the private sector, probably through franchising, and that a further 1,700 rural post offices will be amalgamated or replaced with supermailboxes, and,

Whereas the franchising, amalgamating and replacing rural post offices by supermailboxes will result in a reduction of postal service to rural Canada,

Be it resolved that the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association demand that the Government of Canada instruct the Canada Post Corporation to abandon its plans for franchising, amalgamating, and replacing rural post offices with supermailboxes, and also that the Government of Canada instruct Canada Post Corporation to retain the existing rural post office network.

That resolution passed at the recent SUMA annual convention.

Who would know better, Mr. Speaker, than these people about the effect of closure of their rural post offices? This resolution, Mr. Speaker, and resolutions like it have been supported . . . Indeed there have been resolutions passed, as the member for . . . I'm trying to recall the name of the constituency just outside of Moose Jaw, the one where we lost the by-election a number of years ago, and so I try not to remember the name of Thunder Creek.

The member for Thunder Creek says, well that's fine, SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) passed this resolution. What about SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities)? SARM recently passed a similar resolution. The United Church women recently passed a resolution. SUMA, as I've just read, passed the resolution. Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women and 60 municipal councils in Saskatchewan have all passed these resolution. So, clearly, the people that are going to be affected are in the know. Indeed, I urge them to contact the member for Thunder Creek.

You might be interested in finding out about what's going on in your constituency and others regarding Canada Post. It will be interesting to watch that member and how he votes — whether he's saying, that's fine, let's do away with 1,032 jobs in Saskatchewan. Let's do away with that. Let's do away with the postal service for rural Saskatchewan, as we have known it. It would be really interesting to see just what happens.

There was one further resolution that I would like to read. This one is a resolution re the reduction of postal services in rural areas. The source is the Cadillac-Neville-Vanguard pastoral charge of the United Church of Canada. Well, the member for Melville isn't here, so I guess I can relay this on.

Mr. Speaker: — I think the hon. Member knows what I'm going to say, so I'll just allow him to apologize.

Mr. Threw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, most generous, and I do, of course, apologize. I should not refer to a member's absence or attendance in this legislature.

This motion was presented to the annual congregational meeting of the pastoral charge. The resolution received unanimous support of members present, and copies were sent to the Hon. Michel Côté, minister responsible; the Hon. Geoff Wilson, the MP for Swift Current-Maple Creek; Don Lander, president of Canada Post Corporation, and Rural Dignity of Canada.

The resolution stated, Mr. Speaker:

Whereas the Canada Post Corporation has already started reducing services in certain rural areas, and has confirmed its intention to continue systematically closing an important number of post offices in rural areas, and

Whereas our Church Council is firmly opposed to any reductions of the normal service to which our population is entitled, we do not accept, and will not accept at any time, that our small communities be penalized by the planned reductions.

Therefore be it resolved that we request an immediate answer from Canada Post Corporation and our elected representatives:

First of all, our council wants to be guaranteed that our communities will not have to suffer any form of discrimination regarding the quality of our postal services. Canada Post must not negate its responsibilities by franchising or contracting out of the services which it is required to provide.

Secondly, the rural communities which have already been badly affected by the reductions will soon recover the complete postal services to which they were accustomed.

In the meantime, we are supporting "Rural Dignity of Canada" in order to obtain justice and satisfaction to our legitimate requests.

Unanimous. Unanimously approved, sent on to the appropriate people, and what has been their response? What has been the response of the Conservative government federally and what will be the response of the Conservative government provincially? Federally, they want to do away with 1,032 jobs in rural Saskatchewan: postmasters' jobs, and assistant postmasters'. As I pointed out, 83 per cent of those are women. They want to do away with those very good paying jobs, very needed jobs throughout rural Saskatchewan at a time when we need jobs for more people, simply put, but we also need additional income throughout rural Saskatchewan. There are . . . I suspect a fair number of those 1,032 people are helping supplant the income of their farm.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have talked of the need for post offices

throughout rural Saskatchewan. I have spoken of people retiring in their communities where they earned their income. They've retired there with the assumption that the service offered by Canada Post would continue as it is required by statute. And what we have got is a situation where the federal government is saying, well you know, that's all fine and good for years ago, but no more. We've got to treat rural Saskatchewan, rural Canada, as a distinct, a distinct second-class citizenry.

Mr. Speaker, I urge everyone in this Legislative Assembly to support the motion put by the member for Prince Albert-Duck Lake, my colleague and seat mate, and I urge everyone to support this motion. I am proud and honoured to have been able to speak up for rural Saskatchewan and I challenge members opposite to do the same — speak up for rural Saskatchewan, show your support for this motion that is going to maintain service throughout Saskatchewan — would maintain more than 1,000 jobs throughout Saskatchewan, and provide for the people of Canada and Saskatchewan something they have been accustomed to and something that they are very much entitled to.

Mr. Speaker, I am supporting this motion and urge others to do so, also.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I listened a little bit before the supper break and again afterwards, I felt, even though I am not an expert on the postal service in Canada, that I must get to my feet and make a few remarks. And I think that all during those remarks from the other side, Mr. Speaker, no one really made a good argument that this government has not supported rural Saskatchewan. And of course, if we wanted to get into all the various programs and initiatives of this government, I could go on for a great length of time, but that would get us off the topic of rural post offices, so I won't.

But I think it's fair to say that our minister of rural affairs has been very forthright in his discussions with Canada Post. He recently met with them and I think to some degree of satisfaction, on some of the problems that have cropped up in rural Saskatchewan.

I think what we've heard tonight is another ringing rendition of why the NDP do not understand rural Saskatchewan. And I only go back to my own childhood, Mr. Speaker, in a very small town in rural Saskatchewan. I think the most people that I could ever remember living there were 23 when I was going to school in a one-room schoolhouse. And I would hate it to be said of Harry and Cora Ulf who ran the store — and he was the elevator agent — that they weren't up to providing service to the people of the Baildon community because they weren't a unionized employee, or they were substandard as compared to the service that they gave the people in my community versus the people in the city of Moose Jaw who had a big, fancy post office.

And I think it says something about the members opposite when they would make that kind of comparison about people like Harry and Cora Ulf in Baildon because they provided excellent service to the people in my

community. As a matter of fact, that small community, very close to Moose Jaw, probably survived a lot longer as a community because that post office was in the store than if that store had not been there and we had simply had a Canada Post building.

And I think all across rural Saskatchewan, that same scenario has been the case. It's been real people with some initiative who took the post office upon themselves to integrate as part of their business and as part of their family. And you know, in that family there was five people involved with that store and post office. It wasn't just one. There was five people because somebody was behind the counter in the post office and somebody was behind the counter in that rural store. And because they showed a little initiative and were willing to take that on and provide service from 7 o'clock in the morning till 9 or 10 at night for the people of that community, I think those kind of people should be congratulated.

And no, Mr. Speaker, they weren't unionized and they weren't paid \$12.44 an hour, but they were a very integral part of our community for a long time. And I think if someone else had come along and taken that over, rather than them selling out, we might still have a post office today because the people in my community would far sooner have gone there than strictly to a post office, because there was a sense of community in that store besides the post office.

(2000)

I haven't heard anyone from Canada Post or anywhere else in government, either provincially or federally, say anything about closing all of the post offices in rural Saskatchewan. I mean that's an absolute ludicrous statement to make. There are many places, particularly in the larger towns where there's a very large investment already, that that would never happen and to argue otherwise would be just foolish.

If in some of our smaller centres it is decided that the post office should be in a business, whether it be a garage, an implement dealer, a community association, a craft shop . . . There's all kinds of enterprises out there in rural Saskatchewan, that if putting that post office in there is going to help maintain that town, because I maintain, Mr. Speaker, that if people are going to a dual-purpose location it'll mean more to the community than simply walking into a post office that's open from 9 to 5. People in my community did it for a long time and enjoyed it.

So, Mr. Speaker, the resolve of this government has been there for rural post office . . . I mean the member from Arm River was front and centre with the whole issue of Aylesbury. And I'm sure, as Canada Post has said, that there will be a post office back in Aylesbury — as rightly there should be — but it perhaps will be in private hands. I think the people of Aylesbury can thank their MLA for getting up and fighting for their community, and also their federal MP who also fought for that community. And if that post office ends up in the store or in the garage, I don't see where it takes away from the service of that community because those people who provide that service are every bit as good as someone who is in a unionized post office.

It really bothers me, Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite use these scare tactics, and we see it so many times with all topics in this Assembly. All 1,200 or whatever are going to be fired immediately — they're all women over the age of 40 or whatever — and they're all going to be fired, and they're all going to be out in the street. And that's the kind of sensationalism, the kind of, if you will, Mr. Speaker, garbage that the members opposite feed on.

I wonder what the people in Canada, particularly rural Canada, really want, and I think it's service. They want service, and I don't really think they care one way or another how that service is provided. I know one thing, Mr. Speaker: they're sick and tired of postal strikes. It's a common topic of conversation out there that every time Christmas rolls around, we're going to have another postal strike.

And I firmly believe that people, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, are sick to death of Jean-Claude Parrot and some others holding the Canadian population up to ransom every Christmas. What the people out there want is service. They want the service in their community, and I firmly believe, Mr. Speaker, that they will accept private initiative in the postal service or they will accept public initiative, but what they want is service. That's the bottom line.

When someone in rural Saskatchewan mails a letter, they want to know, Mr. Speaker, that maybe two or three days down the road it's going to get where it's supposed to go — not 8, 9, or 10, as we have in the present system right now, so it's not perfect. And if a little bit of initiative out there in rural Saskatchewan makes sure that my letter gets to where it's going in two or three days, I don't think anybody's going to knock it.

Because what people want is service, and that's what the Canadian postal system in rural Saskatchewan was developed for in the first place. It wasn't a job creation project; it wasn't as a builder of buildings in every town in rural Saskatchewan; it was to provide service to people at the lowest cost possible.

I think this government has shown that resolve in all manner of things in dealing with rural Saskatchewan. And I don't know where the members opposite get off in saying that we on this side of the House are in favour of destroying the postal system in rural Saskatchewan. That's ludicrous — absolutely ludicrous.

We don't object to a little initiative on the behalf of individuals, and some of us don't believe that it will destroy our towns if the individual is running the post office rather than Canada Post.

I think, Mr. Speaker, before I finish up on this topic, that this government has stood four-square in the last six years behind rural Saskatchewan. We stood in this legislature and voted to a person on the postal question brought up by the members opposite. We have done our utmost for every community in this province that has had a problem with Canada Post, and I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the meeting, which the minister of rural affairs had with

Canada Post two weeks ago, will bear good fruit for rural Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that if we're talking about service to rural Saskatchewan, we're all on the same side. If we're talking about protecting Jean-Claude Parrot and his outfit, then probably we've got a difference of opinion, because I'm not sure that that is what is good for rural Saskatchewan. And I think the members opposite, instead of getting their chain jerked all the time by union leaders in eastern Canada, should honestly go out into rural Saskatchewan, where a lot of us grew up and still live, and talk to people and ask them: is it service you want, or is it maybe somebody in a fancy building? And I'll place my bet on service every time, no matter how it's delivered.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate on this particular motion.

Debate adjourned.

Resolution No. 9 – Addressing the Needs of Rural Families

Mr. Anguish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would introduce a motion at the end of my remarks, and I will read that motion into the record now that I will be moving when I have concluded my remarks:

That this Assembly urge the government of Saskatchewan to reverse its decisions to cut back health and other services to rural families; and further, that this Assembly urge the government to implement new programs that specifically assist farm families in economic and social distress.

Mr. Speaker, the people in the province of Saskatchewan have always had a great dream. They had a vision of what they wanted their province to be, and they wanted to work in co-operation with other people within the province and right throughout Canada and throughout the world. But in the co-operative spirit, the people in the province built many, many programs and institutions that served the people in the province of Saskatchewan well for a number of years.

Look back to the period prior to 1944, from when Saskatchewan became a province, we relied almost totally on the fur trade and on agriculture, and we weren't a very diverse area. We were certainly a virgin territory that had been previously inhabited by Indian people, originally, and then by people coming out into the fur trade, and then the migration of farmers into the farming areas of Saskatchewan.

So it started out that there was a dream, Mr. Speaker, and that dream was one of getting wealth from a new land. And as the area became more populated and various types of people came to the province of Saskatchewan, they had another dream. That dream was to build programs that would serve people even though that we were a very small population spread over a large geographic area.

And people spoke loudly in 1944 when they elected a CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) government under the premiership of Tommy Douglas, and at that time the dream came into place because people did not have access to adequate health care, and those that did have access to health care, quite often could not afford to get the services that they required for themselves and for their families and for their friends. And it was a totally user-pay system, although many of the medical doctors, the physicians that were in the province at that point in time, especially those in rural areas, sometimes showed their benevolence by taking meals and taking almost a barter system to pay for their services because they knew in many of the areas that they did not have the money to pay for the services that were required.

I think every pioneer family in the province of Saskatchewan has some example of a doctor that they could find to treat their family in a very understanding way — understanding that the doctor would know that the family might not have money to pay for the services, but nevertheless provided those services. Also, Mr. Speaker, I think that every pioneer family in Saskatchewan would also have a story of being in dire need of medical treatment and running into a physician who would not perform the needed procedures or to provide the medication because the family did not have the money, or the individual did not have the money to, in fact, pay the doctor for the services that they had required.

So in 1944 this — with the poor economic standing of the province — drove people in large numbers to the polls, not only here in Saskatchewan, but overseas as well, Mr. Speaker. We're aware that the Second World War was going on at that point in time. People came in record numbers to vote for the CCF and elected a very heavy majority government in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some strange things started to happen once the CCF government was elected, Mr. Speaker, strange in the sense that they had not happened before in the province of Saskatchewan, our young province. And that was that budgets were starting to be balanced so that your revenue would equal your expenditures, and so that the increased debt that the former governments had placed on the taxpayers in the province of Saskatchewan was not something that was an acceptable practice.

For the first time in the history of our province there was a thrust by the government and the people in the province to accept a mixed economy. And by mixed economy, what we mean is that there was a three-pillar system in which our economic system revolved around. First was one of public ownership; the second was one of co-operative movements; and the third was the private sector, recognizing how important the private sector has been, is now, and always will be in the province of Saskatchewan.

In terms of the co-operatives many people got together, especially in dealings with agriculture, the formation of the wheat pools that I acknowledge it started before 1944, but were then complimented after 1944 by a government that believed in a co-operative approach. And that co-operative approach was necessary because the agricultural people, the farmers, were tired of being taken

advantage of by the grain exchange and wanted a fair return through their own marketing system, so that they could acquire a decent living off of their toils and their labours on the land to grow food, not only for themselves and other people in the province, but for people throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, we also saw electrification come into the province of Saskatchewan, rural electrification. I remember one time doing some work for the member from Regina North East in the Humboldt constituency when he represented that constituency.

An elderly gentleman at Watrous by the name of Mr. Allen, described to me his experiences of trying to convince the government that they should put electricity into the rural areas of Saskatchewan. And his response that he had received from the previous administration before the CCF came along was that he should buy a wind generator through the supply catalogue that had been mailed out to his farm, and that it was unrealistic for there to be electrification put into rural areas of Saskatchewan because of the vast areas, the sparse population, and the great cost that it would be on the taxpayers to in fact put electricity into rural areas.

(2015)

And, of course, Mr. Speaker, we know that after 1944 there was a great movement for electrification of rural areas, and people were appreciative that their way of life in rural Saskatchewan was coming closer and closer to the way of life that people had in the urban centres — in our cities and in our towns — that we often had taken for granted, those that lived in the urban centres. And life was becoming much easier in rural Saskatchewan.

In terms of revenue sharing, a number of those things were not perfected until later years.

The many services that came into rural Saskatchewan developed. It was an evolving process whereby more and more services were provided to rural Saskatchewan, and people wanted to remain living in the rural part of the province because they liked the life-style. They felt they had some attachment to the land and that they felt different. They felt a part of being in rural Saskatchewan, as opposed to those people that had chosen to live in urban centres where the identity of the individual was less. You sometimes don't know the next door neighbour, as opposed to rural areas where you know your entire community. And it's a caring, sharing society where people assist each other in many, many ways that I wouldn't even try to go into answering or listing here this evening, Mr. Speaker.

And during those years — from 1944 until the late 1970s, Mr. Speaker — were, I would say, the best years in agriculture that we've ever experienced. Prices during some of that time were good. The farming operation became much more mechanized. The services were there to make life easier and not a hardship to live in rural Saskatchewan.

Now I know that there are some factors that are beyond the

control of any government. They are beyond the control of individuals. They are factors that come into the market-place. They are factors that are geographic. There are factors that are climatic. But there are many things that governments can do, Mr. Speaker, to affect people living in rural areas.

One of the things that we on this side of the House have always believed in, Mr. Speaker, is that the rural way of life in Saskatchewan is well worth preserving — that that way of life should be preserved. It's a way of life that's worth keeping, and it's a way of life that people appreciate and want to continue living.

However, we do find, Mr. Speaker, that more and more people are leaving rural Saskatchewan, not by their own choosing, but they are leaving rural Saskatchewan because of declining services that are there. They are leaving rural Saskatchewan for the instances where farms have gone into bankruptcy. And the statistics do bear it out, that we find in our province today there are fewer and fewer farmers, and those that are there are farming larger and larger tracts of land.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of this government coming into place in 1982, there has been a lack of emphasis or, I should say, more accurately, a change of emphasis on how rural Saskatchewan is viewed. I know that the Premier and part-time Agriculture minister in the province is on record, prior to his entry into politics, saying that there were a good portion of Saskatchewan farmers that were inefficient and should be off the land to allow those more efficient farmers to take over and become more productive. And I don't know how that fits in now with what the Premier and part-time Minister of Agriculture is saying. But he is not saying anything to dispel what he had put out prior to him entering the political arena back in the days when he was an agricultural economist. And I think looking at it from a very narrow scope, one of an agricultural economist and not someone who had a true appreciation for living and surviving in rural Saskatchewan.

And today we see a government that promotes the way of agri-business, bigger and bigger farms with fewer and fewer farmers, and that might be all right if that's part of the philosophy or the ideology of the government of the current day. But I want to be very clear on record, Mr. Speaker, that we are opposed to that thrust. We want to see rural Saskatchewan remain a vibrant and active part of Saskatchewan. And rather than seeing the depopulation of rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we want to see a repopulation of rural Saskatchewan, and with that repopulation, a revitalization of the rural area of our province.

We look at things like the motion that was introduced earlier this evening from the member from Prince Albert-Duck Lake, where we want the postal services in rural Saskatchewan to be maintained and so that there is a great presence in the rural communities that centres, to some degree, around the post office. Many other things have happened. We saw this government of the day, under the Premier, sell out the Crow rate. No protection for the Crow rate; no protection for rural branch lines — most economic way of moving grain in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. A rebuilding and

revitalization is certainly more important than the twisted policies that the government is placing on rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, just in current years alone, I would want to run through some of the things that this government has done. There's a loss of some \$24 million from the farmers' oil royalty refund program — \$24 million dollars they took out of the hands of people in rural Saskatchewan; just one program cut.

They cancelled the travel grants and clinic operating grants for veterinarians. Last year the province allocated some \$317,000 for travel and granted an additional \$130,000 for clinic operations. Now the member from Weyburn, who's a veterinarian, you would think would speak on behalf of rural Saskatchewan, but he seems to be so consumed by the changes he's making to the education system that he's forgotten how important it is, if you have a farming operation, that you have access for your livestock to a veterinarian to be able to come to your farm or to have that clinic close at hand so you can have your livestock dealt with by qualified people in the rural areas.

In terms of rural municipalities, they're receiving 1 per cent less in revenue sharing than last year, Mr. Speaker. And we know the pressures that R.M.s are under at the present time in terms of the roads, in terms of their administration of local programs — the autonomy that they should have. And what the government is really doing by cutting back funding under revenue sharing to municipalities, is that because of the economic mess that this government has created by perpetual deficit financing year after year, they're putting that responsibility onto local governments to raise additional moneys to allow the provincial government off the hook. And the provincial government is the one who is responsible for the debt that we have. The Minister of Finance and the Executive Council have driven this province into a position that we're about \$4 billion in debt at the current time, spending, I think it's somewhere in the area of a million dollars a day that we pay in interest, Mr. Speaker. And they put this blame back on others. They say it's world economic conditions, things beyond their control, which is not accurate; it's contrary to the facts, Mr. Speaker.

In 1982, when this government took over, the agricultural scene was not better but certainly no worse than it was in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. You look at oil prices. When this government took over, oil prices hit the highest they've been at any time in history, and they still ran deficit budgets. They ran these deficit budgets, not keeping in tune with their predictions. They predicted deficit budgets but when the public accounts were tallied up at the end of the fiscal year we found that their deficits ran far above over what they had predicted.

Lack of planning, Mr. Speaker. You can't run a government by reacting to public opinion polls all the time. Every time the public opinion polls flinch, this government wants to throw it another million or another billion dollars in some direction without any adequate planning as to how that money will be repaid, how much of that share is going to be on the back of the average

taxpayer, or whether or not the money is doing any good.

If money was put into a program that had long- or short-term benefit to the target group, then I think people could accept that. But when there is no plan at all in place, I think people become a little frustrated with this incompetent management that we've seen.

Mr. Speaker, the government has also eliminated some \$120,000 used by R.M.s for perennial weed control, and they're eliminating some \$365,000 in the rat control program. And I know that the Premier said at the SARM convention that that program would not be eliminated. But I would ask the members opposite, how much money is in the rat control program this year? Are you providing more cats in rural Saskatchewan, or is there actually some money there for the rat control program in the province so that it can be an organized and planned program and not a wild cat policy or a dog biting policy or some other policy that the government gives very little thought to.

Mr. Speaker, they've also ... They're cancelling grants supporting soil and feed testing at the University of Saskatchewan. Last year the province supplied some \$80,000 for soil testing and another \$200,000 for feed testing. Seems to me that if we're an agricultural province, it makes some sense to have programs that complement agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan. We have great research facilities that are sometimes taxed to the limits at the university. But when you cut funding for testing programs that deal directly with agriculture, Mr. Speaker, I think that that's very ill-founded and bad planning on the part of the government — a very short-sighted reaction to a situation that has been created by a lack of planning and huge, massive deficit budgets.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial funding for agriculture fairs and exhibitions will be phased out over the next four years. And we know very well that you're helping to end, in some cases, more than 100 years of history for local Saskatchewan fairs. There are some 63 community agricultural societies in the province, Mr. Speaker, and they've been eligible for matching grants of about \$5,000 a year. And there are some 12 regional exhibitions which have been eligible for matching grants of up to \$10,000. The grants were used, of course, as you know, for the operation of fairs and the maintenance of facilities.

Now this doesn't bear any reflection on the amount of money that the fair boards and agricultural societies and exhibition boards require for their annual budgets but it was certainly something that the boards counted on every year to fund the operations that they go through, the fairs that they put on to bring together the people from urban and rural Saskatchewan to have an appreciation of our rural way of life and the importance of agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan. And of course the fair boards and agricultural societies were doing something that's completely contrary to what the government does, because every time the government has a member get up to speak, they try and drive the wedge between people living in rural and people living in urban Saskatchewan.

They talk about union busting versus the farmers and how the union cause all the problems for the farmers. Mr. Speaker, they continually drive that wedge between

working people, agricultural people, business people. Anybody in our society they feel they can divide and conquer, they continue with that type of a policy. And we think it's a little destructive in the province of Saskatchewan to be continuing with that, and we don't think it will work, Mr. Speaker.

(2030)

Mr. Speaker, the list goes on here. I want to continue on with this for some time. Funding for the 4-H regional programs will be dropped 25 per cent each year until it's eliminated in the year 1990-1991, in that particular fiscal year. Well I wonder, what did the 4-H do to hurt the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They must have done something because the government now wants to cut their funding out, to an organization that's been very important in rural Saskatchewan for young people who want to have some understanding, who get more involved in an organized way, Mr. Speaker, for the rural way of life in the province of Saskatchewan. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the cuts to the 4-H regional program amounts to some \$138,000 in the province of Saskatchewan. That's not even one-tenth of one day's interest that this government has run up in the six years or so that they've been the pirates in the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, what about the cuts to the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute? This year they are already struggling, Mr. Speaker, to deal with the 25 per cent reduction that Alberta had put into the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute, and if you're not aware, the funding for the institute is shared by the three prairie provinces, the province of Manitoba, the province of Saskatchewan, and the province of Alberta. And what did the province of Saskatchewan do to protest the reduction from Alberta, their 25 per cent reduction to the machinery institute? Absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker. The facility is located in this province, centrally located in the town of Humboldt, just on the outskirts of the town. And what was their response? It wasn't to protest Alberta cutting the funding by 25 per cent. The government of the day here responded by cutting their budget by 10 per cent to the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute. And it makes it very difficult to plan, Mr. Speaker; it inhibits the work that the agricultural institute or the machinery institute do for rural people and farmers in the three prairie provinces.

Mr. Speaker, those are just a few of the devastating cuts that the Conservative government has put forward since they've been in office. They've taken and they've made the agricultural sector, where farmers used to farm the land, they've changed the mentality of that, Mr. Speaker. What this government has been forcing farmers to do over the past few years is to farm government programs. You can't blame the farmers for this, Mr. Speaker. The blame has to rest squarely on the shoulders of the government. The government has to accept the responsibility of forcing farmers to farm government programs; they want to farm their farms so that they can get a return from the farms that's adequate to pay their bills and feed their families.

This is especially true for those people who are heavily burdened with debt in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Farmers that are burdened with debt cannot make ends meet these days; they just can't make it happen. So I think that the government has to take action, not only for farmers but people living in rural Saskatchewan, if they want to continue to live there. And it's not the type of things, Mr. Speaker, that we want to see where they devastate health care for people in rural areas.

Mr. Speaker, everyone in the province by this time knows that there were changes to the prescription drug plan in the province, where people who rely on prescribed medications, medications, prescribed by physicians, that they can't afford, they phone their MLAs — and I know the Minister of Health has had a number of inquiries come to his office. But what's the government's response? They're not understanding of the problem, Mr. Speaker. Maybe they're all wealthy enough and their parents and grandparents are all wealthy enough to afford the great cost increases in prescription drugs.

Their response is that they had to do it — I heard the Premier say this one day in the legislature — they had to do it because there's too many prescription drugs being used illegally on the streets of Saskatchewan. What an insane comment for the Premier of the province to make, Mr. Speaker. Seniors in this province are not drug abusers.

In the report that just came down on the prescription drug plan, Mr. Speaker, in the year where it was still operating so that people could take their \$5 — less than \$5, you can round it off to \$5; you could take your \$5 and go and get their prescription drugs — Mr. Speaker, the people that utilize that program the most are our senior citizens in the province. Mr. Speaker, about 13 per cent of the Saskatchewan population is 65 years of age and over, and do you know that that segment of our population, Mr. Speaker, utilize over a third of the entire prescriptions in the drug plan; over 33 per cent is used by seniors in the province of Saskatchewan.

And the Premier of this province is saying that they can't have that plan, that program any more because they're abusing drugs.

That's absolutely correct. The member from Saskatoon Sutherland says they're abusing seniors, and that's exactly what this government is doing. In the long run I think they'll pay for it, Mr. Speaker, but that remains to be seen come next election time.

Now the other example of a devastating cut to rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is the dental plan. We had in this province, Mr. Speaker, a school-based dental program for children that was the best anywhere in North America and possibly the best anywhere in the world. That program has been completely obliterated by this government. The government gives all kinds of rationale as to why they did it, but the fact remains is that they changed the program so fewer people have access to dental care in the province of Saskatchewan. Fewer communities have dental clinics than under the program, Mr. Speaker.

On this side of the House our leader, the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, has pledged that under a New Democrat government these programs will be reinstated — the prescription drug plan and the school-based children's dental program.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are asking for this. In fact, the Premier of this province has acknowledged, "On Friday, November 13, 1987, Premier Grant Devine announced his government had made a mistake . . ."

Mr. Speaker: — Order. The members are not to use names of other members in the legislature.

Mr. Anguish: — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was quoting from an article here. I'll just read the quote to you. "On Friday, November 12, Premier (beep, beep) announced his government had made a mistake." That's the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan and he was referring to the school-based children's dental program, Mr. Speaker.

Now they've acknowledged they've made a mistake in the drug plan. They've acknowledged they made a mistake in the dental plan. What are they going to do about it? Well first off, in the drug plan, they're going to have rapid payment envelopes where your money comes back a lot quicker. I understand now they're going to have a plastic card system so that everybody in the province, I guess, will get a plastic card. We don't know all the details on that plan yet. And I guess when you go into the drug store or the hospital, eventually, or the dentist, I imagine you'll shove your card through a computer and that'll dictate to you whether or not your services will be paid for and so that you can receive the medical treatment that's necessary.

Mr. Speaker, almost all children in the province still qualify for some dental care as they did under the old plan, but it's the accessibility that's been devastating for rural areas, and the limitation on the number of visits that can be made to a dentist.

I know in our own family, Mr. Speaker, we have three children that qualify under the plan. Two of the children have not been to a dentist since the plan was changed because it wasn't necessary for them to go; the third child has been to the dentist to receive some service, and now we're informed that they can only make that one visit per year — once per year, Mr. Speaker. When our three children were under the school-based children's dental program, they received visits on the basis of need.

An Hon. Member: — That's not true, what you're telling us.

Mr. Anguish: — The Minister of Health says what I said is not true. I challenge the minister, Mr. Speaker, to check with the dentists in North Battleford. Our three children have been enrolled in the program, the new revamped program of the Conservatives. Our one daughter — Ashala is her name, Mr. Minister; you can check this out. She made one visit to the dentist; now we're informed that she has to make another visit to the dentist. There will be a charge to the family. Now that's accurate. Now that's accurate, Mr. Minister, so now who is saying things that

are contrary to the facts?

An Hon. Member: — You are.

Mr. Anguish: — That's not correct, and I ask the minister to check that out.

They don't have any answers; it changes from time to time, Mr. Speaker. But we do know that we can likely afford to have our daughter Ashala go back to the dentist again if she requires further dental work to be done this year. But I know many people in the province that can't afford to have that done. People living in rural areas can't always bring their children in the distance that they have to come.

An Hon. Member: — Why?

Mr. Anguish: — They're asking why. Why?

An Hon. Member: — The member from Shaunavon.

Mr. Anguish: — The member from Shaunavon — let's see. Let's see the Shaunavon constituency — what have we got out there in Shaunavon? Oh yes, Shaunavon. Shaunavon — there were school-based clinics in nine communities; now there is a dental practice in one community in the Shaunavon constituency. That's the answer for the member from Shaunavon, Mr. Speaker. It's because you've got a reduction of almost 90 per cent in the dental services in the Shaunavon constituency.

An Hon. Member: — And he supports that.

Mr. Anguish: — That's fact, Mr. Speaker, and the member from Shaunavon supports that.

We should maybe review some of the other communities, Mr. Speaker, that have been devastated by the changes to the school-based dental program. Arm River constituency — children's dental care was available in school-based clinics in 12 communities under the old plan. It is available in private dental practice in two communities under the new plan — from 12 to two. Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, there were school-based clinics in nine communities; now there is a dental practice in one community. I guess the dentist is still travelling to Gravelbourg — hasn't arrived there yet. I asked the question in the legislature, must be a month ago now, and the dentist was on the road, and everything had been set up. He must have got stuck in Old Wives Lake as he was crossing the road there.

Bengough-Milestone, the member from Bengough-Milestone, in your riding there were school-based clinics in 15 communities; now there's a dental practice in one community — 15:1, good ratio. Biggar. Biggar, the member from Biggar . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes. There were school-based clinics in nine communities; now there are dental practices in two communities. Canora. Canora constituency, there were school clinics in 11 communities; now there are dental practices in two communities, Mr. Speaker. Cut Knife-Lloydminster — the member with the report card — there were school-based clinics in 10 communities; now there is a dental practice in one community. Estevan —

the riding of the Premier and part time Minister of Agriculture — there were school-based dental clinics in seven communities; now there is a dental practice in one community. Indian Head-Wolseley, there were school-based clinics in 12 communities; now there are dental practices in four communities. Well Indian Head-Wolseley didn't do bad. It did a lot better than the average constituency. This must be intervention by the member, the minister of privatization.

Kelsey-Tisdale, there were school-based clinics in nine communities; now there are dental practices in three communities. That's not bad. The Minister of Rural Development must have done his work. There's only — what is that — a 60 per cent reduction?

(2045)

Kelvington-Wadena, Kelvington-Wadena. There he is. I think he's the Legislative secretary to the Minister of Agriculture. We look forward to you being appointed as Minister of Agriculture as soon as the part time guy is done. Kelvington-Wadena, there were school-based clinics in nine communities; now there are dental practices in three communities.

In Kindersley — there's another cabinet seat — there were school-based clinics in seven communities; now there are dental practices in two communities. Kinistino, there were school-based clinics in 16 communities; now there is no dental practice in any community. The member from Kinistino should be ashamed of that. I don't know how he answers questions to his constituents when they don't have any dental clinics in the constituency.

Last Mountain-Touchwood, there were school-based clinics in 14 communities; now there are dental practices in nine communities, as one dentist has seven satellite practices. So, although nine communities are served, seven of them are satellites, where — how often do they have someone come around? Is it once a month, once every two weeks? Maple Creek, there were school-based clinics in eight communities; now there is a dental practice in three communities — better than average, but we have to appreciate that that's the riding of the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker. Melfort, there were school-based clinics in six communities; now there is one dental practice in one community.

Melville, there were school-based clinics in nine communities; now there are dental practices in two communities. Moosomin, there were school-based clinics in eight communities; now there are dental practices in three communities — how about that, member for Moosomin? Morse, there were school-based clinics in six communities; now there is no dental practice in any community in the Morse constituency. Nipawin, there were school-based clinics in eight communities; now there is a dental practice in one community — way to go, member from Nipawin. Pelly constituency, there were school-based clinics in four communities; now there is a dental practice in one community. That's only a reduction of 75 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Prince Albert-Duck Lake, there were school-based clinics in three communities; now there is a dental practice in one community. Qu'Appelle-Lumsden — Minister of Finance — there were school-based clinics in 10 communities; now there is a dental practice in one community. Quill Lakes, there were school-based clinics in 11 communities; now there are dental practices in three communities.

An Hon. Member: — What a record!

Mr. Anguish: — Shameful. Redberry, there were school-based clinics in 10 communities; now there is a dental practice in one community.

An Hon. Member: — Read that again.

Mr. Anguish: — That was the Redberry constituency. I don't want to repeat anything, Mr. Speaker, because I have a list that I want to go through here.

Now Rosetown-Elrose, there were school-based clinics in eight communities; now there is a dental practice in one community. Rosthern — the member from Rosthern — there were school-based clinics in 11 communities; now there are dental practices in three communities. Saltcoats, there were school-based clinics in nine communities. Shaunavon, there were school-based clinics in nine communities; now there is a dental practice in one community.

Oh. The member from Shaunavon holds up the two-fingered salute . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . There was one announced today? The program is really moving. I will adjust that figure, Mr. Speaker, so that we're with the greatest deal of accuracy. Now I was wondering if the member could motion to us what community that went into . . . He doesn't know. Let the record show he doesn't know, Mr. Speaker.

Shellbrook-Torch River: there were school-based clinics in nine communities; now there is a dental practice in one community, Mr. Speaker. Souris-Cannington, Deputy Premier, the Deputy Premier comes from there: there were school-based clinics in 11 communities; now there are dental practices in 3 communities. Thunder Creek, there were school based clinics in 10 communities; now there is no dental practice in any community in the Thunder Creek constituency. The member from Thunder Creek, Mr. Speaker, is up here tonight saying how much he had done for rural Saskatchewan. I can see he must have spent a lot of time helping rural dental clinics out, Mr. Speaker. The Turtleford constituency, there were school-based clinics in 10 communities. Now that's the best record of any constituency in the province, Mr. Speaker, held by a Conservative member — only a 50 per cent reduction in that amount.

Mr. Speaker, we can look now at the — where are we? — the Weyburn constituency. There were school-based clinics in 5 communities; now there are dental practices in 1 community, Mr. Speaker. Wilkie constituency,

Wilkie constituency, there were school-based clinics in 8 communities; now there are dental practices in — does the member know? — three communities, Mr. Speaker, 3 communities.

An Hon. Member: — It's 4.

Mr. Anguish: — He says four. Could you name the fourth one? I'd like to amend the record to make sure it's accurate . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Let the record show the member doesn't know how many clinics there are in his constituency, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — What a group.

Mr. Anguish: — What a group. And, Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal of inaccuracies in what is said about what happened to people that were in the program. There are some 411 workers that worked in rural communities, had wages that went into rural communities, had housing, shopped at stores, used post offices — 411 people that are no longer employed there, Mr. Speaker. And when one Elaine Bouvier phoned her MLA to criticize the government's action . . .

An Hon. Member: — Where was that at?

Mr. Anguish: — Well, where was that at? She phoned her MLA — PC Shaunavon constituency — to criticize the government's action. Know what he told her, Mr. Speaker? You know what he said? He told her to apply for welfare. No wonder, Mr. Speaker, the welfare rolls in the province of Saskatchewan are rising so rapidly.

Their solution is — when they devastate a program — is to have all the people go and apply for welfare if they took the direction of the member from Shaunavon. Hard to believe that that would be a recommendation coming from an elected member of this legislature; hard to believe that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that we on this side of the House believe in rural Saskatchewan. We believe in the way of life, we believe in the people that live in rural Saskatchewan, and we believe that the way of life there is worth preserving. It's worth revitalizing rural Saskatchewan so people can go back onto the farms and farm their land. They can go back to their communities and work in their jobs. They can go back and build businesses in rural communities centred around elevators and post offices and essential services such as schools and churches in rural communities, Mr. Speaker.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put forward the following motion. I move, second by the member from Prince Albert-Duck Lake:

That this Assembly urge the Government of Saskatchewan to reverse its decisions to cut back health and other services to rural families; and further, that this Assembly urge the government to implement new programs that specifically assist farm families in economic and social distress.

I do so move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert-Duck Lake, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm, pleased to enter this debate and, as well, to second this motion put forth by the member from The Battlefords. And as I listened to his address to this House tonight, it told me clearly that from one corner of this province to another people are feeling betrayed and have good reason to feel betrayed by this government led by our Premier. This government that has become so insensitive and so out of touch and so out of tune with not only urban Saskatchewan but now even rural Saskatchewan, what was their electoral base.

This weekend, Mr. Speaker, I had the occasion to talk to a family member, and he indicated to me that although he comes from a PC riding, a riding held by the member from Shaunavon, that the people in his area are feeling the pressure from an insensitive and an uncaring government. And this family member talked to me about the incompetence of this administration, but he also talked about the devastation of rural Saskatchewan and the families who live in that area. And he indicated to me that his feeling was, and the feeling of people that he talked with right from Estevan through to Gravelbourg, through the Lafleche area, through Shaunavon, that the people in those areas are concerned about two areas. And if there are two issues that are going to defeat this government in Saskatchewan, and he's convinced firmly that they are, it's the decimation of the drug prescription plan and of the school-based children's dental program.

And as my colleague from The Battlefords went through the list of clinics, dental clinics that used to be in this province, and when I hear the comments from members on the other side who indicate that they feel the program is intact, it's in place, and that the children are getting the service that they require, it just confirmed that family member's indication and feelings that these people are out of touch and that they no longer care.

And when I look at the riding that my family came from, from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, and I look at the fact that there are . . . there were nine communities served by that program and now only one, and when I listened to the questions from the member from The Battlefords questioning as to when Gravelbourg is going to have dental service in their community, it brought me back to years back when I used to go there to get my teeth repaired as a kid. And it reminded me of the hours I spent in that dental chair wishing that I would be anywhere but, but it reminded me that there was a dentist at that time. And it reminded me that the children of the generation after me had the luxury and the opportunity to be served by a dental therapist that they didn't fear, a person that they respected, a person now unemployed by this government. And I say, Mr. Speaker, it's a sad commentary on a group of 30-some MLAs who purport to represent and care about the people of this province.

And I say that this motion before us today is just so much more appropriate even than it would have been a year ago because what I say is that the true Tory colours are coming through in this session and in the last session of this administration.

Mr. Speaker, never before in the history of this province, perhaps with the exception of the Ross Thatcher years, have so many people been hurt, and so many people, so many families been torn apart by such a small group of uncaring politicians. Never before in the history of this province have urban and rural families suffered the number of breakups, and never before have so many families lost family members to suicides because of the stress that they could no longer take; a pressure, I suggest, unparalleled, with the exception of the Liberal Thatcher years.

I want to look at some of the programs that they promised to . . . that would alleviate some of this social distress and some of this economic disharmony.

(2100)

In 1985 the Premier of this province promised the people of rural Saskatchewan, along with his federal cohort Mr. Wise, from Ottawa, that there was going to be a drought program. There was going to be a flood program. There was going to be a program to eliminate pestilence in the province; the rural people were expecting that there would be relief from insects.

But I tell you what this government has done. This government in '85 made a promise — made a commitment — and in '88 a program that could have and that should have alleviated those problems, in '88, in the winter, when there's no snow and the farmers know that they're going to be facing dry conditions in the spring — where's the program Oh, well it's not there yet. And later on in the spring when they're preparing to seed and there's no rain come, where is this long-term planning, where is this long-term program? Oh, well it's not there yet.

And I want to say that the people of rural Saskatchewan are disappointed in this government. There's a feeling of mistrust and a feeling of total uneasiness. And I want to say that the government will pay for this, Mr. Speaker. Families in rural Saskatchewan shouldn't have to be subjected to the kind of pressures, economic and social, that this government has allowed to happen.

We travelled through, when we were on a bit of a drought tour throughout the province, and going into the communities that were suffering under those conditions. We met with urban business people. We met with councillors of one of the members here who haven't seen him since he was elected in 1986. The member from Shaunavon, there were councillors complaining that he wasn't around. Well where is he? They'd like to meet with him; they'd like to talk with him and tell him the problems that they're having in their town, not being able to collect taxes from their business people because they're making no money, because there's no money in the community, because there's no long-term programs from this government. That's what they were asking.

We met with business people who said, we've heard these guys talk about alleviating the agricultural problems in rural Saskatchewan but not one word addressed to the small businesses in Saskatchewan — just talk, just

rhetoric, but no action.

We've talked with people in those communities who have said their towns are dying, their populations are dwindling. They've talked about the loss of the health care programs that they had. They've talked about the increased costs for prescription drugs. And they've talked about all of these things, but the overlying thing that they've talked about is the inability of accessibility to their MLAs.

It's no wonder that that inaccessibility is there and that they don't understand that there are economic and social problems out there. Because when you scrap — and the Kinistino riding is an example — when you scrap 16 dental clinics — 16 — and not one left, how can that member comfortably go back to those communities and with any conviction tell them that he cares about their problems, that he understands their problems, that his government is concerned, and that things will change?

I'll tell you what's happened, Mr. Speaker — their credibility rating is so low that they're afraid to go back and speak to their people. And I can go through instance after instance. I can single out some in terms of The Liquor Act right now who are afraid to go back to their ridings. I know who they are and you know who they are. And I know the member from Morse is not that comfortable with it, and I'm waiting to see what he's going to do with it. Or is he going to have yet more problems in going back and facing the people in his riding? I'd like to know whether the member from Elrose is going to be comfortable going back and presenting this kind of legislation. And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe he will.

And I would ask the member for Moosomin if he's proud of that new Liquor Act, and if he wants to see easier access to alcohol to young people in this province. Is that what he wants? Is that what his people are asking him for? I suggest to you that that's not what they're asking for. That's why this kind of a motion is just more and more relevant, and as this government gets closer and closer to the crunch, come election time those members will be disappearing further and further into their little knot-holes into the woodwork.

How do they deal with the community organizations that are sponsoring the fairs — the fairs that they've cut back funding to that the member for The Battlefords alluded to — the fairs that had been funded for decades; places where people gathered to look at new farm machinery, to visit with their neighbours, to allow their kids a day away from the farm, or from their town — a day of fun?

And this government scraps even the funding that was there in order to maintain buildings and help them present these fairs in 63 rural communities in this province.

And cutting funding to something as basic and as decent to the rural children in this province as funding to the 4-H groups — I say shame on you members from that side. You've got \$10 million for Peter Pocklington, but you haven't got any for the kids whose parents you represent in this legislature. You haven't got any to fund their local

4-H groups, but that's your priorities. That's where your priorities lie. The PC government's priorities lie with the millionaires and the out-of-province entrepreneurs and the fat cats, and you cut little elementary programs to people in rural Saskatchewan.

And in my home area, Prince Albert Rural School Division No. 56, that school board had to make a decision because this government chose Peter Pocklington over the kids in Prince Albert-Duck Lake. And that school board had to cut nine school teachers — nine people who were delivering educational programs to the children of that area, who are no longer there because of the decision you made to support Peter Pocklington, and Weyerhaeuser from Tacoma, Washington.

And we understand you're broke. I mean, clearly we know you're in debt \$3.7 billion; we understand that. But with your kind of mismanagement it's inevitable, and with your kind of mismanagement you've got to see educational programs cut back, and you've got to see health care cut back, and you've got to see the dental programs cut back. There's only so much money to go around. And when you spend like drunken sailors, as you guys have done, on your PC, fat cat friends, you can only expect to have people programs cut. And people programs to me are the community fairs, and people programs are the dental program, and people programs are schools.

And I say, as you guys decimate rural Saskatchewan, and as the small towns dwindle and die, and as there are less kids out there, it's your neighbour's children that are going to be driving 50 and 60 miles to find a school to go to. And if you want residence schools like some of the people of northern Saskatchewan have been forced to do — to send their kids from La Loche and Buffalo down to Prince Albert to get a decent education, and if you want residence schools for your rural children in southern Saskatchewan, you just keep devastating rural Saskatchewan and small town Saskatchewan. If you want your kids from Shaunavon to be going to school in Assiniboia, you keep bankrupting small-business people out there.

And you develop schemes like equity financing that will allow your fat cat friends to buy Saskatchewan people off of their farms. That's what you keep doing. And when you see farms that average 30 and 40 and 50 sections out in the Shaunavon and in the Gravelbourg and in the Assiniboia and in the Ponteix area — when you see farms of that size and one farmer per 20 square miles and you see those kids being bused 60, 70 miles to find a school, then maybe you will rehash what you've done in the early 1980s, and maybe you will sit down and say, I made a mistake, and I deserve an apology to the people of this province.

What have you done in terms of long-term viability? What have you done in terms of debt restructuring? Your solution is nothing but equity financing. Bring your fat cat friends in to bale the farmers out. How do you bail them out? Move them off the land; they don't have a debt problem any longer; somebody else owns the land. And where do we go when we get them into the cities? Where

do we find them work? You put 299 potash workers out. You've got unemployment unparalleled in this province; you've got people by the thousands leaving the province because you can't find work. Where are you going to send the farmers that you shove off the land? That's why I say, Mr. Speaker, that this resolution is very appropriate and very much in tune with what this government has been doing, and that members on this side of the House are urging this government to rethink their programming.

We're asking them to not come out with piecemeal programs and a deficiency payment when an election is imminent. We're asking for a program for some help for the family farm viably sound. We're asking for some help for the business people in those communities who are facing bankruptcies and closures. And we are asking for a reasonable level of health care for those people, not only in rural Saskatchewan but in urban Saskatchewan as well. But we're asking this government to stand back and have a look at what they've been doing, and from their mistakes, take that lesson, develop a program with vision for rural Saskatchewan, develop a program that shows some care for the needs of the people of Saskatchewan.

I guess in short what we're asking you to do is to govern as people in this province are used to having government, because the people in Saskatchewan are not used to the kind of government that this administration has delivered since 1982. They're used to a government that does some long-term planning, that is willing to intervene in the economy when necessary in order to deliver the revenue that we need to bring services such as education and health care to the people of this province, the revenue to help the farmers in the tough times without breaking the bank. They're looking for a government with a vision for the future of this province.

And I'm sad to say, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that I would want to support this resolution and that I was glad to second it is because this government needs some new direction. And if this debate in any way will urge this particular government to step back and re-think its priorities, re-think the Weyerhaeusers over the people of the province, and re-think the idea of giving to Manalta Coal ahead of the people of this province, and re-think the idea of giving to Peter Pocklington before the people of this province — and we're asking the government, through this resolution, to re-think those priorities so that you can deliver a decent level of health care, so that you can alleviate some of the economic and the social distress in rural Saskatchewan — in short, Mr. Speaker, so that the people of Saskatchewan can be proud of the government that reigns in this legislature, that rules in this province.

Because I would say, Mr. Speaker, if this government doesn't re-think where they're going, and if this government doesn't re-think what its been doing, the people of this province will make the choice. And that choice will be to remove you from making those decisions, because there is a feeling right now that you are not only incompetent, but that your government doesn't care. And I believe, when you have people of a mood and of a mentality where they'll no longer accept the direction you're going, you would want to step back, re-think your priorities. And so with that, Mr. Speaker, I would simply say that I am pleased to second this motion.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I just wanted to get into this very exciting debate and, Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned, on division, at 9:14 p.m.