

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Simard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the members of the Legislative Assembly, a group of approximately thirty Grade 8 students from Argyle School in Regina who are here to visit the legislature today. I will be meeting with them after for pictures and drinks, and to talk with them for a while, so I'd like to ask you and the other members to join me in welcoming this class.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Environmental Impact of Power Projects

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the Premier, and it concerns what is probably the biggest environmental fraud ever perpetrated on the people of Saskatchewan, the Rafferty-Alameda project.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Premier, it has now become very clear that you and your ministers directed a conspiracy to circumvent the environmental process of the federal government in this projects, and your own document shows that to be true.

In a letter of November 10, 1986, a letter to Robert Walker of Environment Canada, George Hood of Souris Basin Development Authority wrote about anticipated problems with the project and the federal government. And in that letter, he states your strategy for the project, Mr. Premier, and I quote to you the letter. He says:

Our strategy has been and will continue to be to take the project as far as we possibly can on our own and build as much momentum behind it before we open the process up to other governments.

Now, Mr. Premier, how do you justify this blatant breaking of the law by your government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order! Please be seated. Order. I believe maybe we should start question period off on the right foot and allow the minister to answer the question. Allow the minister to answer the question without interruption.

Order. I ask the co-operation of the members once more, and that includes all members.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for the question. And I want to advise the hon. member that the Department of Environment is the

department that sees that the letter of the law is followed when it comes to environmental impact assessment.

The letter that you quote from was from the proponent, the Souris Basin Development Authority. And I think if you were to look at the replies that were given by Bob Walker, and his statement that we indeed had to go on and be involved with the federal government because this project included international waters and fish-bearing waters, and therefore was a project that the federal government needed to be involved with.

I want you to realize that going back as far as 1984, the federal government has been involved in that particular project. They helped to draft the guide-lines that were used for the environmental impact assessment; they helped to do the review of the whole environmental impact assessment; and the federal government is very pleased with the way that this particular project has gone forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I'd ask a question, a new question to the Premier who refused to answer the last question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, will you address the question, and will you respond as to whether you agree . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . If I may have the floor, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, do you agree . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order! Order. Allow the member to ask the question.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Do you agree, Mr. Premier, that it is appropriate for the Department of the Environment and the Souris Basin Development Authority to have a strategy in place, sanctioned by you, Mr. Premier, because it's in your constituency, a strategy that says that they will continue to put as much momentum into this project as possible before any of the other agencies and other governments can be involved, so that then they are in a position where they cannot stop it? Do you agree with that strategy, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. We can't get the questions off and we can't get the answers off if the respective members will be interrupted, so once more I'm simply asking the House for your co-operation.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question, I think, lacks credibility. The Department of the Environment has done nothing to push this project forward faster than any project should go forward.

This project was given the opportunity for a detailed environmental impact assessment. When the public review period came, we allowed 60 days for the public review rather than the normal 30. We also appointed a board of inquiry that went around and did a very thorough study of that project. The board of inquiry gave its report in January, and we issued the approval for the project in February with much of the direction that was provided in that report.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this particular report has had a very good hearing before the public, before the people of Saskatchewan. I'm very pleased that our department has done a thorough job of reviewing that whole project.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — New question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, the Minister of the Environment may do his song and dance to try to protect you, but it's not going to work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — It's not going to work, Mr. Premier, because the facts are the facts and they're clear. In that letter which was written, which I refer to, Mr. Hood also says the following:

It will come as no surprise to you, I'm sure, that a number of federal officials have in the past expressed their aversion to this particular project.

Now, Mr. Premier, knowing in advance, knowing in advance that the project was not going to be looked upon favourably by the federal government, the Souris Basin Development Authority, which you appointed, decided to shut them out of the process. Now I ask you, Mr. Premier: who made that decision? Was it Mr. Hood? Was it the Minister of the Environment? Was it your seat mate, the Deputy Premier, Mr. Premier? Or did you make that decision?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Speaker, it appears to me that the hon. member is somewhat confused. The Souris Basin Development Authority is the proponent of the project, and as the proponent of a project, likely will try to expedite moving his project through. When you talk about the actual approval of a project, that comes back to the Department of Environment and the department's environmental assessment branch. That branch has done a very thorough study of that project. I'm proud of the decision that was made there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Let me try the Premier one more time, Mr. Speaker. He is in the House.

Mr. Premier, you yourself have been quoted in the media as saying that this information is going to have no bearing on the Rafferty project, that you are going to, in an arrogant way, proceed with the project regardless of anything that is said, or any evidence that is provided. Is that the strength of your commitment to the environment which your throne speech talked so glowingly about? Is it your position that the environment is only precious when it is politically expedient, and that at all other times deception and hiding the facts are appropriate?

Now, Mr. Premier, why don't you be honest for a change, and why don't you admit that you have no commitment to environmental protection when your political needs are becoming more of a priority?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Speaker, I think it's interesting today to see the member who is asking the question, the member from the Regina North East riding, stand up as an environmental critic and try to tell us that his past record on environment has been so great.

I sat just about in that chair at the time that he sat here on this side of the House, and that member was the member that was part of the government who actually poured concrete over the PCBs at Federal Pioneer. Now he stands up with this kind of a song. Mr. Speaker, I don't take him very serious when he does things that way.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — New question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am prepared to defend the record of the environment of the former government any day, any place, which is something the Premier is not prepared to do here today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now, Mr. Premier, when officials of government and cabinet ministers break the law, when cabinet ministers break the law, they should lose their position. And normally under a situation as serious as this one in our system of government, you, sir, would do the honourable thing and you would resign.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that this . . . That's probably too much to ask of this particular Premier, so I ask him, will he do at least the next honourable thing and fire his Minister of the Environment today so we can begin to turn this thing around.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. I would ask the Minister of Finance . . . Please allow the hon. member to go ahead with his answer.

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a very serious accusation that the hon. member makes. I think if the hon. member goes back and reviews the project of the Rafferty-Alameda project right from beginning to end, at no time will he find that any member of this parliament, any member of this cabinet, have ever broken the law on this project. This project has been handled in a very forthright manner, and it has had all the opportunities for public input that any project could have.

Mr. Speaker, no, I won't resign. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that if every time this group called for somebody to resign, we wouldn't have any government. I don't take their call very serious.

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Premier, if the Premier is alive down there and breathing.

Mr. Premier, on October 27, 1986, an official of the Department of the Environment, R.E. Walker, wrote to Mr. George Hood. Mr. Hood is director of planning

operations at Souris Basin Development Authority. Mr. Walker is the civil servant in charge of assessment of determining which projects are sound environmentally. And I want to read to you the opening sentence of that letter, Mr. Premier. It says:

Federal Environment in Rafferty-Alameda environmental impact assessment. As you are aware, I am becoming increasingly concerned that Saskatchewan Environment has, as directed, not yet involved either federal or Manitoba environmental interests in its review of the proposed Rafferty-Alameda project.

Mr. Premier, in light of the statements made by your Minister of the Environment that the federal government was involved since 1984, we have an official in the Environment department denying that statement. I want to know from you, sir, who is not telling the truth to the people of the province. Is it Mr. Walker, or is it your Minister of the Environment? Who, sir, is not telling the truth?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Speaker, I want you to take notice of the time of the letter. The letter was October of 1986. The environmental impact assessment of the Rafferty-Alameda project was beginning, but was not near completion. That particular environmental impact assessment came to the government in June, then went back for additional work and came to the government again in July of 1987.

So yes, Bob Walker was concerned, but we were not at the stage where there had been any environmental impact assessment completed for the federal government to review. Immediately that we had an environmental impact assessment, the federal government was involved in the review, and a complete copy of that environmental impact assessment was mailed to the Minister of Environment in Manitoba. They also had that same opportunity to review it.

Now when the letter says "as instructed," I believe if you go back to the legislation, that's where the instruction comes is that that is part of the review process. That's why Bob Walker wrote that letter, and that was his . . . that's his way of wording it. And I believe if you check with Bob, he was following the law to the letter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again my question is to the Premier, because the date was October 27, 1986. This minister wasn't the minister. Somebody directed Saskatchewan Environment not to involve the federal government. And I would remind the Premier, I would remind the Premier, Mr. Speaker, that section 10 of the environmental impact Act says that as soon as a minister knows that an environmental assessment is going to be carried out — not when it's done, not when it's in the process, but as soon as he knows it's going to be carried out — he has the responsibility of informing those people who will be affected.

The question is, Mr. Premier, to you: did you — or was it the Deputy Premier — direct Saskatchewan Environment not to involve the federal government and not to involve the province of Manitoba in the environmental assessment review process, contrary to section 10 of the legislation which governs the conduct of your minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Speaker, the federal government, as I told you earlier, was involved as far back as 1984 in helping to develop the project's specific guide-lines for the environmental impact assessment. So they've been involved right from the beginning, right from the very early beginning. They were involved again when the environmental impact assessment was provided by the Souris Basin Development Authority. They were also involved at the end of July in the whole review process. I think if you talk to the federal government, you'll find that they were completely satisfied with the involvement they had in this project.

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's incredible to listen to the statements of this minister which are directly contrary to the facts as written by the members of his own department.

Let me continue quoting from the letter I've read. New question, Mr. Speaker, and the question is directed again to the Premier in hopes that he will answer and take responsibility for the action; this letter says:

The same has been true for other provinces with an interest in Saskatchewan development proposal. Since Manitoba has not yet been involved in our review of the Rafferty-Alameda proposal, that province might understandably feel its only recourse is attempt to have its concerns expressed through the federal process.

Project-specific guide-lines for the proposed Rafferty-Alameda development are in final draft form.

That's in the same letter that the environmental department officials say: keep Manitoba in the dark, keep the federal government in the dark. This is totally contrary to the truth, Mr. Speaker. What that minister is saying is totally, totally contrary to the truth.

I want to know who is telling the truth in this House. Is it Bob Walker? Is he telling the truth? Or is it the Minister of the Environment or the Premier not telling the truth? Somebody here is misleading the people of this province and this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Speaker, the drafting of the project specific guide-lines, as I told you, went back to 1984. During that time the federal government and the Saskatchewan government worked together to draft the guide-lines. I don't think it's customary to involve every province in Canada when you draft guide-lines, but the federal government and the provincial government are the ones that we involved, and I believe they were the

right people to be involved throughout that whole process.

Mr. Lyons: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment, since the Premier won't answer the questions. The final paragraph of the letter . . . excuse me, a new question. I will phrase it as a new question in order to be able to read this into the record.

The final paragraph of this letter says:

Accordingly, I feel we should arrange to involve federal and Manitoba environmental interests in our review of the Rafferty-Alameda project as soon as possible.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have today — and I want the people of Saskatchewan and the press to take note of this. The Minister of the Environment has said that the federal government has been involved in the review since 1984. Mr. Walker's letter, in 1987, says: perhaps it's time we should involve the federal and the province of Manitoba officials in this process.

The question is very simple. Someone here is not telling the truth over this matter. Is it Mr. Walker? Is Mr. Walker not telling the truth on this letter of October 27, 1986? Mr. Minister, is Mr. Walker not telling the truth? Is that what you're saying about this official?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Swan: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that the hon. member is a slow learner. I've taken him through this quite a few times.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Swan: — And I believe that the federal government felt that they were very much involved. The paragraph that he draws attention to dealing with Manitoba — I have said before, they were not involved up to that point. Bob Walker is writing to the Souris Basin Development Authority telling him that he feels now is the time that he should involve the others. That's what his letter was all about. He proceeded to do exactly that.

I believe that Manitoba and the federal government had all the opportunities they needed. Whether or not the Manitoba government of that day took advantage of those opportunities, that was their decision, but they had the opportunity.

Green Feed Program

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, last Friday I referred to your remarks, remarks that you made during the Assiniboia-Gravelbourg by-election where you told farmers that participants in the green feed program would not be short-changed by the drought program. Mr. Minister of Agriculture, will you answer my direct question today? Do you still hold the position that farmers taking part in the program will not be short-changed by the drought relief program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member knows, and the farmers know, that anybody that participated in the green feed program would not be discriminated against, and they will not be discriminated against. They've been paid.

For those that have seeded prior to June 20, 1988, and salvaged feed because of the green feed program, they received \$15 an acre, and they will receive, obviously, the money from the feed, and they can receive the drought program, less the \$15 an acre. So the combination of being paid a drought program plus \$15 an acre plus the feed is hardly being discriminated against, Mr. Speaker.

If it's after June 20 and they've summer-fallowed, obviously you can't receive a drought payment on summer fallow. And I think the hon. member knows that's the deadline. And maybe he would agree, or I'd assume that he would agree, that if you're going to get paid for summer-fallowing, you can't get paid for drought as well.

So the June 20 deadline was acceptable among farmers; they could get both the \$15 plus the price of their feed, or they could feed it themselves, plus the drought program. And they will get the combination of the three, Mr. Speaker, which I believe is only fair.

Mr. Upshall: — A question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, on page G-2 of the form, I will quote, and it says, "Payments to producers who also receive benefits from the federal-provincial green feed assistance program will be reduced."

The question I ask you now, Mr. Minister, is: were you aware November 14, the time you were issuing your press release, that you were issuing confusing and misleading information?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I thought I made it clear. If an individual in a very dry area receives \$40 an acre on a drought payment, he can't be expected to also receive \$15 an acre on a green feed program, plus having the feed itself, which is worth some value. So we said we would not discriminate against anybody that participated. So if he was going to receive \$40 an acre, we say, Mr. Speaker, he's received 15, so he gets \$15 on the green feed program, \$25 on the drought program, and all the value of the feed. So the combination is greater than you'd received if you hadn't participated in the drought program because you have feed, which is an advantage over both, Mr. Speaker. So he gets the drought program, he gets his \$15 an acre, and he gets access to the feed supplies.

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, again we are seeing the problem that you and your counterparts in Ottawa put forward. Farmers don't know the details of the program before they have to make a management decision.

The farmers did their part by participating in the green

feed program. They have used their machinery, they put in their labour and other expenses in order to qualify for that program. They're telling me now that if they would have sat on their backside and done nothing, they would have got more money because they wouldn't have had to go through the whole process.

Now, Mr. Minister, the farmers did their part. Will you do your part and explain to the farmers just why you manipulated and used them with your half-baked, **ad hoc** program?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we've spent quite a bit of time in the House convincing the hon. member that the green feed program was a good idea so that people could salvage feed and they wouldn't have to go and pay for very expensive feed because we wouldn't encourage them to take their crop off early.

And I believe originally he was against the green feed program and argued against it. Finally, when the farmers thought it was a good idea, because thousands of people participated, I think that perhaps he's fallen in line and figured it's a good idea. And even today he talks about farmers and their machinery as if he still hasn't made up his mind.

It was a good program; they enjoy it; they salvaged feed all over southern Saskatchewan particularly, or the southern half of the grain belt. And on top of that, Mr. Speaker, they get access to a drought program. Now if he's saying he wants maximum drought plus green feed plus the rest of it, then other farmers are going to say, well then why wouldn't you give me the benefit all over the place of a green feed program?

We said we would be fair and not discriminate against anybody who had the green feed program and, Mr. Speaker, we're not. They get access to their feed, the green feed program, and the drought program at the same time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, and with leave of the Assembly, I would like to make a motion:

That this Assembly express its condolences on the passing of Father Sean O'Sullivan, the former member of parliament for Hamilton-Wentworth, who passed away on Thursday, March 9, 1989.

I so move, seconded by the member from Melfort.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Last week a distinguished Canadian who had a special affinity with the province of Saskatchewan, and who had countless friends in

Saskatchewan, died in Toronto. Father Sean O'Sullivan, 37 years of age, passed away after a long and brave battle with leukemia.

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and with the concurrence of the fellow members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, I want to take a few moments to pay special tribute to Father Sean O'Sullivan.

Sean O'Sullivan was a young boy of 12 when he first met his hero and mentor, the Rt. Hon. John Diefenbaker. A very special friendship between young O'Sullivan and the old chief from Saskatchewan began.

In 1967, at the age 15, Sean O'Sullivan organized a nation-wide organization of friends of John Diefenbaker who loyally stood behind the chief as he faced his last national conventional in Canada. Diefenbaker never forgot the loyalty Sean O'Sullivan gave in standing with his friend in his darkest hours.

Sean O'Sullivan came to Prince Albert in 1968 to work on Mr. Diefenbaker's campaign in the federal election in that year, and that began a special relationship here in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, in the years that followed, many Saskatchewan people came to know Sean O'Sullivan as a special friend.

In 1972, at the age of 19, Sean O'Sullivan became the youngest person in the entire history of Canada to be elected to the House of Commons in Ottawa. Sean O'Sullivan served in parliament from 1972 to 1977, and during his years as a member of parliament, though he was young in years, he became respected for his principles, his integrity, and most particularly for his love of Canada.

Then in 1977 this young man gave up a promising future in politics to become a Roman Catholic priest. Father Sean O'Sullivan felt that he could better serve humanity in the service of God.

His devout Roman Catholic faith and love of his people, his caring and compassionate ways were an inspiration to everyone who knew him. Though I did not know Father O'Sullivan in a close, personal way, I knew of his respected reputation.

Five years ago Father O'Sullivan was told he had leukemia. Instead of giving up his life, he became a model of faith and courage for Canadians from coast to coast. He wrote a book, *Both My Houses*, an inspirational book that was a nation-wide best seller.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to pay tribute to the memory of Father Sean O'Sullivan, a great Canadian and a special friend to Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Wolfe.

Mr. Shillington: — I want to begin by bringing greetings from the constituency of Regina Centre. I do so with a tad more emotion than I normally would. If the redistribution Bill is passed, and if rumours of an impending election this year prove true, this might be the last time I in fact bring greetings on behalf of Regina Centre.

Nearly 14 years ago I was nominated to run in that riding. Four elections have passed, some of them easy and some a little more challenging. Throughout the 14 years I've enjoyed a good relationship with the constituents. And if indeed I am representing another riding after the election, I will leave with many a fond memory.

I want to congratulate the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg. I do so out of courtesy and, I think, also out of pure sympathy. I'm sure, given the details of the drought program and the green feed program, there's probably very few people in that area who are congratulating him now. I want to extend a helping hand to someone who I think probably needs it.

I want to say a word or two about agriculture. Sitting, Mr. Speaker, watching this government opposite over the last seven years, I've developed a definition of bad management. Watching this government operate I would define bad management as the pursuit of short-term gain at the expense of long-term pain . . . with apologies to John Crosbie. And that's what this government has been doing over the last seven years, pursuing short-run interests without worrying about the long-run affect. Well, Mr. Speaker, some of those long-run effects are coming home to roost in a number of ways.

That is particularly true in agriculture. One might begin with the \$25 an acre loan program that was announced some five years ago. Mr. Speaker, there were those of us who . . . I thought it obvious at the time that one of the most serious problems which beset agriculture was that the agricultural industry, if I may refer to it in that fashion, family farms were carrying far too much debt, far more debt than the price of grain and the quality of the crops could service.

It seemed equally obvious, Mr. Speaker, that if you add a billion dollars in debt to the farms of this province, you add very considerably to the problem. I, and a number of others, said so at the time. A whole lot of people are saying so now, Mr. Speaker. The Premier, who was also the Minister of Agriculture, now has a stable of lawyers whose sole function is to harass farmers for these loans. Indeed, I see the statements of claim are on a word processor because they all . . . and all you do is change the name. They're suing so many of them they can't possibly type them out individually.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word or two about the deficiency payments. I, and a number of others, Mr. Speaker, heard the federal Minister of Agriculture and the provincial Minister of Agriculture promise \$40 an acre. Indeed, the federal Minister of Agriculture was so obliging as to issue a press release on the subject, just in

case there be any doubt. So we have the figure from his office.

Rather than \$45 an acre, Mr. Speaker, we now have a maximum of 12, and probably an average across the province of \$3 — a thin, almost invisible shadow of the program that was actually announced.

Mr. Speaker, this government has an unusual approach to the federal government. Virtually since the inception of the province, provincial governments have acted as spokesmen for provincial interests. And that has been particularly true in the area of agriculture, which is an area of shared jurisdiction.

This government has adopted an approach which, if it isn't unique in Canadian history, it's certainly most unusual. Rather than acting as a spokesman for provincial interests, this government has acted as an apologist for the federal government, in the hope that in payment for that service the federal government would shower money on the province when the province asked. That's always been a crass and cynical approach to government — too crass and too cynical for virtually anyone but this government opposite.

It's also now proved to be very foolish, Mr. Speaker. Some hon. members will have noted the results of the last federal election. In the last federal election, listening and enthusiastic about the New Democratic Party farm policy, farm program — enthusiastic as well about the candidates in rural Saskatchewan — a majority of the rural ridings in Saskatchewan elected NDP MPs. It is now an accurate statement, Mr. Speaker, at least in federal terms, that the NDP is the voice of rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that apparently hasn't been lost on members opposite who now see fit to punish the voters. The \$45-an-acre program appears to have evaporated on November, on election day, when the voters of rural Saskatchewan didn't vote for them, punishing the voters of rural Saskatchewan with this niggardly program which is woefully inadequate, which is woefully inadequate. As many farmers have observed, it isn't enough to put in . . . it won't pay for the gas to put in the crop.

Added to that is the green feed program, and if the Premier doesn't understand what he's done, then he ought to get out of his farm on south Albert and get out and talk to some of them . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, he ought to stop farming in the flower-bed in his backyard and get out and talk to some of the real people, because this is really an outrage.

They were told last summer in unmistakable terms it didn't matter whether they contributed . . . whether they participated in the green feed program, they wouldn't be discriminated against. And of course they have been. If they had left the crop standing — for many it was a marginal decision — they might well have got the same amount of money if they'd left the crop standing and taken it off. Those who let the crop stand and took it off, get the deficiency payment. Those who in the balance decided to participate in the green feed program, lose it and don't get a thing.

That isn't . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well if the member wants an opportunity to explain the green feed program, I can arrange a meeting in various parts of the province, particularly the south country where this is going to cause some very real hardship. If you think I don't understand it, then I can find any number of farmers who don't understand it as well, and who would greatly appreciate your explaining it to them. So if you want an opportunity to explain it to them, we can arrange it.

Just as, even more serious, Mr. Speaker, is the announcement in the throne speech of the equity financing. Let's understand what this is, Mr. Speaker; this is turning farmers from landowners into wage-earners.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Esterhazy finds this speech amusing. I'm pleased. Anything I can do to lighten the burdens carried by members opposite, I'll certainly do. I know you people are carrying a heavy burden these days, being Conservatives, and if I can lighten your load I'm happy to do so.

I say to the member from Esterhazy that probably, although I don't know your circumstances, probably your grandparents or great-grandparents were like my grandparents; they left Europe in the last century to avoid . . . and travelled half way around the world, braved incredible hardships, with no opportunity of ever returning to the land of their birth, all for one reason, one word: land. There was land available. They wanted to own their own land.

Now, less than a century later, right-wing governments . . . now, less than a century later, right-wing governments seek to set up virtually the same land holding system whereby those of affluence, those with money, the privileged, own the land, and those who work the land do not own it. That's the system they left in Europe over a century ago. And I say to members opposite, if you think you can sell that to the farmers in Saskatchewan, then you're dreaming; you are really dreaming.

(1445)

I know that you've sold it to the banks because they've got land they want to unload, they can't sell. They get to liquidate their security. If you think the banks are motivated by any other motive, you're naive.

It may appeal to farmers in trouble because it allows them to carry on farming. But the vast bulk of rural Saskatchewan will reject equity financing, and come the next election they're going to reject more than equity financing, they're going to reject those who are proposing it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — I want to talk for a moment about the finances of the province. I don't intend to spend a long time on this subject. We'll have an opportunity to do that in about a couple of weeks.

I do want to say to the members opposite and to the Minister of Finance . . . It's a shame the Minister of Finance was unable to stay. One charitable assumption

today was that he wasn't feeling well.

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Speaker: — What is your point of order?

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, I think it's the time-honoured tradition in this House not to mention the presence or absence of members.

The Speaker: — That certainly is the rule that's abided by in the House, and certainly the point of order is well taken and all members should adhere to it.

Mr. Shillington: — Well, I think I can safely say, Mr. Speaker, that the member who just spoke need never worry about being the victim of that rule, because nobody would know whether he's here or not.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — I was going to say of the Minister of Finance that the most charitable assumption I can make about his behaviour today was he wasn't feeling well. Indeed I was going to ask you, Mr. Speaker, if we might get some medical attention for the Minister of Finance.

I wanted to draw to the Minister of Finance's attention the fact that . . . and I wanted to ask the Minister of Finance what steps he has taken to deal with what I think is a very serious question, the plans that the federal government appear to have to reduce, if not eliminate, transfer payments between the federal government and the provinces.

In one sense, Mr. Speaker, this government richly deserves that treatment. That's what you've been doing to the municipalities and the hospitals and the school boards for many years. You have been passing your tax burdens on to them. You have passed them on to the cities in a major way. The hospital waiting lists are dramatic evidence of it, and so are the conditions of our schools and universities. So this government opposite richly deserves to have the federal government balance their budget at their expense. The problem is that the public of Saskatchewan don't deserve it. They really do not deserve this government's programs or policies.

And I would hope the Minister of Finance would take some steps to bring to the attention of the federal minister the inadvisability of reducing transfer payments. I would hope that the Minister of Finance . . . the Minister of Finance has never in the past been bothered by hypocrisy, so I don't suppose this argument would bother him. But he might say to the federal minister: for goodness sakes, don't do to us what we've been doing to the cities and the hospitals and the universities and the school boards over the last seven years. It's one task that the Minister of Finance is amply suited for. The rest of us might find it hypocritical, but I think you'll get through it.

I want to mention, for a moment or two, the levels of taxation in this province. Mr. Speaker, the fiscal policies of this government since 1982 have simply been the height of foolishness. I ask members opposite just to look at what you've done over the last seven years. You took

off the gas tax, reduced the sales tax, ran up a huge deficit, and now you've imposed them both to pay the interest. I ask members opposite: what earthly sense could that possibly make to you?

I don't know whether or not the members opposite thought they were immune from the laws of gravity in 1982. You took the taxes off with no thought of where you were going to get the money. Again, Mr. Speaker, an illustration of bad management — a short-term gain at the expense of long-term pain.

Well the long-term pain is here, Mr. Speaker. The electorate in this province are groaning under an ever-increasing tax burden. All of us had an opportunity last fall to reacquaint ourselves with the electorate. Those of us in urban municipalities, many of us were involved in three elections. One of the things we heard most frequent . . . I see the member from Albert south was only involved in two elections.

An Hon. Member: — I didn't campaign in the municipal like you did.

Mr. Shillington: — I'll tell you, you did. I'll tell you, the former minister of Social Services did so poorly in the municipal election that I wouldn't admit having anything to do with it either. I wouldn't admit being anywhere near that campaign. It was a disaster.

An Hon. Member: — How did you make out on our other two?

Mr. Shillington: — Well, how well did the member make out in the federal election? You only won four of them. I wouldn't call that a great victory. I wouldn't call that a great victory.

At any rate, Mr. Speaker, one of the things we heard, without attempting to talk sense to the member from Albert south — I know that's an impossible task, and I was foolish to have started it — without trying to talk some sense to the member from Albert south, one of the issues we heard most frequently, Mr. Speaker, was the issue of taxation. Every man, woman, and child in this province, paying an extra \$500 in direct taxes. Mr. Speaker, they're beginning to feel it, they're beginning to complain about it, and they ask themselves, how on earth can this be?

Services are deteriorating. Municipalities don't have the money they need to keep the streets in decent repair; hospitals have long waiting lists; universities — the condition of the universities embarrasses anyone who's familiar with it; schools are deteriorating. They ask, how can this be?

Well I say to members opposite, you took off the gas tax; you reduced the sales tax. Now you've reimposed them, and all they do is pay the interest. And indeed they don't pay the interest any more.

I think it's going to be a fact this year, Mr. Speaker, that for the first time in the province, for the first time since the war, the interest will be the second largest expenditure in this province's budget. Only in health and education will we spend more. That has all been accumulated under the

brilliant auspices of basically the member from Kindersley, who's now given the job to someone else.

The same comment can be applied to oil royalties — the height of foolishness. We took off — this government took off oil royalties at a time when the industry was booming, force-fed an industry which couldn't operate at any higher capacity. That extra money went to line the pockets of big oil. We've pumped out more oil and got less from it last year than we did in 1982. We pumped out a larger volume of oil and got a lot less in royalties. That again, Mr. Speaker, contributed to a large deficit and interest payments which are now creating a serious dent in the provincial budget.

When members opposite vote for the budget, keep in mind you're voting for an administration which has, at a time when it wasn't needed, run up a huge deficit; now has as its second largest expenditure, interest payments. And maybe that's some of the reasons why you don't have money for deficiency payments, why you don't have money for urban services.

I want to, in the period of time that's left — and it's not a long period — I want to say a word or two about privatization. Mr. Speaker, this is simply a new word for, and a new method of, conducting an old practice, and that's patronage. This is patronage in its richest form.

Let me give the member from Wilkie a little assistance with this issue, since he seems to be having some difficulty. Let me give him a couple of examples: DirectWEST . . . well if it must be understood by the member from Wilkie, it's going to take an awful long time, and I haven't got that long.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — Let me give you a couple of illustrations. DirectWEST — you transferred to a company called DirectWEST, made up of some employees but also of the owners of Brigdens Printing Company . . . You gave them the most lucrative segment in SaskTel's business. You gave them an asset of enormous value, the right to print and publish the province's telephone books.

I will venture to say, Mr. Speaker, that when the time comes in Crown corporations, they will not give us the details of the contract that Brigdens got. I'll bet you until after the next election we will have no idea what it's costing us, what the terms of the contract are, what, if anything, they paid for this.

That is what they did with respect to another company, WESTBRIDGE. They transferred to WESTBRIDGE assets of enormous value. Not only did WESTBRIDGE get a great deal of computer equipment, but what is more, it got something much more valuable than that, and that's a contract to provide computer services to this government. We have no idea what the contract is. We have no idea what they paid.

But let's have a look at SaskCOMP just for a moment, Mr. Speaker. Let's assume that WESTBRIDGE has the same contract that SaskCOMP had. If that's the case then if they

paid SaskCOMP . . . the last annual report of SaskCOMP stated the province had an equity of \$10 million. Let's assume WESTBRIDGE paid \$10 million — I'm not prepared to assume that for a moment because I suspect they got it for a lot less than that. Let's assume, however, they did pay \$10 million, and let's assume that they have the same contract SaskCOMP enjoyed. They would enjoy a 34 per cent rate of return on their investment — very, very lucrative contract. But these are all assumptions; we don't know. We don't know what, if anything, WESTBRIDGE paid. We don't know what their contracts with the government are. That's the fashion in which this government operates.

And the only conclusion which I, and members of the Saskatchewan tax-paying community, the only assumption we can make is that those contracts will not bear public scrutiny and that's why we haven't got them. There is, in other words, something to be ashamed of.

Privatization with this government has involved selling off the most profitable parts of the Crown corporations, leaving the taxpayer to carry the burden with respect to the balance. This is certainly true in the case of the telephone directory in SaskTel. The annual report doesn't give us separate figures with respect to the directory. It is generally known and appreciated, however, that the directory was a real money-maker.

Let me tell you something, Mr. Speaker, that wasn't a real money-maker, and that's the telephone system itself. The telephone system in rural Saskatchewan does not break even; it doesn't in urban Saskatchewan. What we have in SaskTel, or what we had in SaskTel, was something we used to call cross-subsidization. The computer side . . . the telephone directory subsidized the little black telephone which sat on your desk, and you got that at a price which was less than what it would have cost to provide it, and less than what you would pay elsewhere. If you think telephone systems are expensive in Saskatchewan try North Dakota or Montana, they're a great deal more.

We subsidized the telephone system because we said people do not necessarily need computers, but they do need the black telephone, and everyone should get that at the lowest possible cost. It's an almost certainty, Mr. Speaker, that telephone rates are going to go up, and go up fairly dramatically now that they have sold the computer side of the company, now that they've sold the directory. It's almost certain that rates will go up.

It's also the case, Mr. Speaker, with respect to SaskEnergy. I invite members to check the last annual report of Saskatchewan Power Corporation. That annual report breaks down the figures. Members can see for themselves that SPC has made a lot of money over the years on the sale of natural gas, and has lost money over the years with respect to the selling of electricity.

(1500)

I think these figures are accurate. Since the company has begun to sell natural gas, they have accumulated net profits of \$248 million in the natural gas side, and losses of about \$15 million on the electrical side. We have

always subsidized electricity and natural gas.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, it is a case of urban Saskatchewan subsidizing rural Saskatchewan. Natural gas up until very recently has been sold in urban Saskatchewan. Rural Saskatchewan gets by with electricity and heating oil which they buy privately from private vendors. I don't think many people in urban Saskatchewan were quite ready to do that.

We all enjoy benefits of a strong agricultural economy. The real losers with the privatization of SaskEnergy is going to be rural Saskatchewan. It is rural Saskatchewan which has had the electrical side subsidized. It is they who are the big users of electricity. When they sell SaskEnergy, it is rural Saskatchewan which is going to face it; it is the people in rural Saskatchewan who pay the largest electrical bills.

This government is also, Mr. Speaker, selling off money assets which are making money. One of the really . . . There are any number of examples. Let me pick a couple that come to mind — Sask Mining. The last annual report I had in my office downstairs at least, was 1987, and I think that's the last one that's been . . . I don't think the '88 one's been filed.

In the 1987 year, SMDC reported profits of \$60 million. The year before that they'd reported profits of \$40 million. 1988 was a banner year in the mining industry. The profits of most mining companies doubled or trebled. That 60 million, or 120 million, or 180 million dollars, which is not available for hospitals in Saskatoon, streets in Regina, for any number of projects needed in Moose Jaw and elsewhere . . .

An Hon. Member: — Downtown revitalization.

Mr. Shillington: — Downtown revitalization. It's money which is not available, but badly needed for a deficiency payment, and that's one company, Mr. Speaker. We have given away 60 million and probably two or three times that when that company was privatized.

In bowing as they do at the altar of private ownership, they short change the public of this . . . the public of this province in the services they get. That is distressing. What is heartening, though, is that the public are coming to realize that, and members opposite will understand that in a very direct way when you have enough nerve to call an election.

Mr. Speaker, the time is going on and many members want to speak. I want to close by saying to members opposite that when you have enough nerve to call an election you're going to find out, if you haven't already, some things the public don't like.

All of us last fall participated in at least one election, and most of us participated in two or three. As we went door to door, we found out some things; we reacquainted ourselves with the electorate. We found out that the electorate don't like the changes in the dental plan. We heard it everywhere.

I suspect even members opposite found out that the

public don't like the changes in the drug plan. I suspect members found out — opposite — found out what we've been telling them all spring, and that is that the hospital waiting lists are unacceptably long. And when they're dealing particularly with older people, or with families who have older people as one of their members, they're concerned about the shortage of nursing homes. Right? What members are going to find out is when they have enough nerve to call an election that the public have come to the conclusion they don't much like Tories.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's apparent that I will be voting against the main motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure indeed to rise in my place in this Legislative Assembly once more to participate in this debate on the Speech from the Throne. And certainly, sir, I want to extend to you my best wishes for this session. I hope that your job will be a relatively easy one. I know that there are some dire prognostications in terms of the route that this legislature is going to take, but certainly you have our pledge as well, I think, that we will, in the spirit of lively debate, also offer you as much co-operation as we possibly can.

I would further, Mr. Speaker, like to add my words of congratulation, as well, to our Lieutenant Governor as she read so effectively the throne speech for the first time. I just want to wish her the best in a very, very exciting period of time in her life over . . .

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Shillington: — I'm wondering if the member would permit a question?

The Speaker: — Will the member permit a question? I have no indication, therefore I just assume that the member will not permit a question. The debate continues.

Mr. Neudorf: — As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, I think in the speech that I have prepared for the hon. member's digestion, some of those questions that he has will certainly be answered in no uncertain way.

But I was saying about the Lieutenant Governor, I want to extend my remarks, Mr. Speaker, to include a most hearty welcome to the newest member of this legislature, my newly found friend and colleague, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — In the short period of time that he has joined us in our caucus and in this legislature, he already is having his impact felt. And in the course of my remarks I want to make sure that I draw it to the attention of all the people of Saskatchewan, and particularly to the people of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, to the vibrant, vigorous individual whom they have elected. And it is just my great deal of pleasure that I will be able to work with this man for the next good long time.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I want to reflect a good portion of my remarks on the short, the relatively short period of time that the Leader of the Opposition did speak to us. And I must admit that although I was tremendously impressed with his short period of remarks in terms of presentation, style, and so on, I have to admit that I was deeply disappointed in the artistry that he displayed, in the sophistry of his remarks, which make us wonder in terms of what really goes on in the mind of the member from Riversdale in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, when I spoke in the throne speech last year, I made a point of pointing out to the members opposite, and indeed to all members of this House, the nature and meaning of the process that we go through in these privileged halls. And I repeat again this year, Mr. Speaker, that these are indeed privileged halls. They're privileged in many ways.

There's freedom of speech here, freedom of debate for every member to stand in his place and tell the people of Saskatchewan what he believes in and what the government should be doing. And this freedom is protected by a powerful thing, Mr. Speaker, an extremely powerful thing unique in parliamentary procedure. And of course, Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the absolute immunity, the absolute immunity that members of this Assembly enjoy in law for any comments that they would like to make in this place.

And last session, Mr. Speaker, I urged the members to show respect and have a sense of just how powerful that immunity is. Show respect for the people you represent, and don't go on witch-hunts after individuals who cannot defend themselves in this Assembly. Show respect, and make use of your free speech to tell your constituents what you believe. Tell them what your policy is on important issues of the day. All I asked, Mr. Speaker, was for all of us to treat this institution and the people of Saskatchewan to the respect to which they are entitled, and of which the Speech from the Throne is symbolic.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if we review the last session, we find out that the members opposite would not accept this advice. We find that they continue to slander people in the House, and they know that these people cannot defend themselves. They continue to refuse to tell the people what policy they have on any subject. They continue to use their powerful privilege of unfettered free speech to persecute individuals and to hide from the people of Saskatchewan, to refuse to explain any policy that they might advance.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think it is a shame, a crying shame, when the leader, when the leader of a political party — and yes, I'm referring to the member of Saskatoon Riversdale — it is a crying shame that he would stand up in an honour-bound institution such as this Legislative Assembly and use the debate on the Speech from the Throne to engage in character assassination of people who cannot be here to defend themselves.

He stood in this House on Thursday and he attacked the reputation of individuals who cannot defend themselves, and I'm going to list some of those individuals. He

attacked Mr. Archambault; he attacked Jack Cennon; he attacked George Hill; he attacked Dr. Schwartz; and he attacked John Gormley. He attacked all those people and many more, Mr. Speaker, but he did not tell us one thing he would do if he was Premier.

These people that he is attacking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are not here. They can't defend themselves. So this man who would be Premier, in an act of rare courage . . .

An Hon. Member: — He will be premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — I think the people, they are going to hear this phrase. They are going to hear this phrase from me quite a few times, because this man who would be Premier is going to find out. And oh, how brave from the member of Riversdale; oh, how brave to attack people who cannot answer themselves in this House. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're going to call that man on those attacks, and I'll deal with that as we go along.

But he did more than that. He attacked members also, members on this side of the House, and he attacked, particularly, back-benchers. But that's part of the game, and we will defend ourselves. I am a back-bencher, and I take offence at that form of attack from the Leader of the Opposition. I am offended by being called anaemic. I resent being characterized as atrophied. And your canned speech remark is an insult to all politicians whose existence depends upon their ability and their communicative skills.

I resent this indignity, particularly from a party leader, from a party man, a party leader who would be Premier. That is unbecoming. It is not the respect that this man should have for this institution, a man who should, in his position, rise above that type of fray. And you will find that our back-benchers certainly are quite willing and quite capable to defend themselves.

And I can assure you members opposite that this speech is going to be one that is not anaemic, not atrophied, and it will be one back-bencher's speech that you would wish was canned.

(1515)

But I want to speak to the vision contained in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, a vision that escapes the NDP, totally escapes them, because they are too busy looking at the past, dreaming of the past, living in the past, Mr. Speaker.

There is a need to be forward-looking and to have a plan for action, and this government, Mr. Speaker, has just produced such a plan. This government, Mr. Speaker, this PC government, is the government that has acted and is acting on behalf of agriculture. The depth and the breadth and consistency of support for agriculture demonstrated by this government goes beyond, goes way beyond anything that the NDP can understand — six per cent money, ag credit, livestock advance, livestock investment tax credit, livestock facilities and tax credit, deficiency payment, and much, much more, Mr.

Speaker.

We have listened to the NDP gang over there stand up and tell us how much they care about agriculture. What utter hypocrisy — hypocrisy. Let me ask, Mr. Speaker, let me ask: what is the source of debt crisis in rural Saskatchewan today, in 1989? What is the source of our agricultural problems? You know, Mr. Speaker, the NDP knows, and the people of Saskatchewan know that the source of the problem in '89 is the policy of the NDP in 1980, '81, '82.

When interest rates were shooting up in 1980 to 1981 and '82, the member from Riversdale and his cronies and the family of Crown corporations, what did they do? Nothing. They did nothing, Mr. Speaker, and it is sickening. It is just sickening that he has the gall to stand in this House and to assault the agriculture policy of this government. What gall, and the hypocrisy of the Leader of the NDP is audacious; it's beyond audacious, the height of hypocrisy.

The member for Riversdale had the gall — as you recall on Thursday, Mr. Deputy Speaker — the member for Riversdale had the gall to talk about the Canadian Wheat Board. And I'd like to revert for a moment to my previous and honourable tradition of teaching. Let me be a teacher for a moment for the member from Riversdale and his NDP caucus: a history lesson, a brief history lesson.

The Canadian Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker, was founded by a Progressive Conservative government. It was no wide-eyed NDPer who created that institution. It was a progressive government that created the wheat board, and let us never forget that.

And another piece of history for the NDP, Mr. Speaker, another piece of history. It was not — was not, Mr. Speaker — an NDP government that brought medicare to the nation as a national plan for all Canadians. There has never been a federal NDP government — never. There has never been a prime minister who was an active NDPer, although I suppose Mr. Trudeau came close. The NDP like to claim him for their own, and I say they can have him.

Still, the NDP has never, never enjoyed the confidence of a majority of Canadians, so don't sit there across the floor and claim you did it all alone. Don't get on your soap-box and pretend to be the only ones around who had anything to do with medicare because, Mr. Speaker, that kind of statement is a lie. It is a lie pure and simple. And this nonsense that the PC government, that I am proud to be a member of, that we are opposed to government involvement in the economy. That statement would be a lie, Mr. Speaker.

Let me ask: what is the rural natural gas distribution program? I wonder how many members opposite know that? Well, I'll tell you. It is a program to bring natural gas to rural families at a huge cost to the government, Mr. Speaker. It is government acting to provide service to rural Saskatchewan.

What is the Saskatchewan Water Corporation, Mr. Speaker? It's a Crown corporation created by this

Progressive Conservative government. And in a couple of years we'll have the NDPers over there standing on their soap-box once more, saying they created it and claiming it as their own.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we heard the member for Riversdale, we heard the member of Riversdale talking about stupidity, talking about stupidity. I was shocked, Mr. Speaker, to hear that kind of terminology from a leader, from the would-be premier, that he would demean himself to that degree.

Well let me educate him a little bit about stupidity. He talks about the stupidity of our agricultural policies. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was the farmers of our province who turfed him out in 1982, 1986, and in Assiniboia-Gravelbourg.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — When you want to talk about stupidity, all we have to do is take a look at the death taxes, the succession duties that the NDP government put in. It was when a farmer died and his land had to be paid for and it was reverting over to his wife. She had to come up with the money to pay for those succession duties that those members across placed on that land. And how many wives and how many children and how many families in this province suffered, lost their farms because of the stupidity of the succession death tax instituted by the members opposite.

And it is also the height of stupidity for the NDP minister of Agriculture in those days to tell farm families in 1980 that they should get out of everything except grain. Can you imagine? To get out of everything except grain. Don't diversify; growing wheat is enough. That was the advice that he gave them. They told farmers, and I quote:

To change over to straight grain is necessary. We are diversified enough.

That was the NDP policy, Mr. Speaker, a policy of stupidity.

And then when you throw in the land bank, is it any wonder that they were turfed out in '86, '82, and again in '88? And will be once more in 1990. We are still, Mr. Speaker, trying to restore the damage ravaged upon the farmers of this province in the last administration of the NDP.

And so, perhaps, I must admit that it is a blessing in disguise that members opposite and the leader of the party opposite do not have an agricultural policy, because if that is the policy that they have, it is indeed a blessing that they do not have, and we cannot afford any more like that.

And it is not bad enough that farm families have to fight droughts and floods, grasshoppers, Mr. Speaker, but they have to fight the NDP too. They have to fight the member for Riversdale, the man who today says that he is so interested in farm families, but that he had made a career of throwing them off their land.

First, he tried to nationalize all the farms in Saskatchewan with the land bank. And then when farm families threw him out in '82, he decided that he was going to get them. He decided that he was going to get even with the farm families of Saskatchewan. So this leader, who now claims to care, decided to get even with farm families in Saskatchewan, and he went after them with a vengeance. And what a hypocrisy, what a hypocrisy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He took up a career on foreclosing the farms.

And they don't like to hear that, Mr. Speaker. But I echo the words of my colleague from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg. It's about the NDP, and it's time for them to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Farm families in this province suddenly found not only did they have to fight the weather, not only did they have to fight the banks, but they had to fight the leader of the NDP.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to the members in this Legislative Assembly, and to the members opposite and particularly to the Leader of the NDP, I would like to introduce to you a family — a man and his wife — that the Leader of the Opposition foreclosed on, a man who fought this member's firm, a man who fought the weather, fought the banks, and fought the Leader of the NDP.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, this man is in the gallery right now. I would like him to stand and be greeted by the Assembly. I introduce to you Evelyn and Allan Gaudet, their son Terry. I understand Terry is 16 years old today but he's looking forward to his birthday tomorrow. I'm certainly glad to see him here. And their son Keith and wife Jo Anne are also in the building.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want the Leader of the NDP to have a look, not at a statistic, but rather a family, a family that has been brutalized and savaged by this man who cares, this man who says: I work for the families of this province.

Mr. Gaudet was forced off his farm, Mr. Speaker, by the member for Riversdale. He met him in a court of law, and the member for Riversdale did not have concern for this farm family that he suddenly claims to have today. The member for Riversdale not only did not have any concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but he had no mercy. I'll take my revenge, said the member for Riversdale, I'll take my revenge on this farm family.

What do we have to do, Mr. Speaker? What do we have to do to make the point? Do we have to use the NDP tactics of filling this whole auditorium . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I would ask members to refrain from using unparliamentary language even from their seats.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the concern of the members opposite. A nerve has been struck, a nerve has been struck . . .

An Hon. Member: — Appreciate their embarrassment.

Mr. Neudorf: — And the embarrassment, as my colleague says, is something that they are trying to hide by trying to shout me down, but I will not be silenced. I will stand up for the farmers of Saskatchewan like my colleagues on this side, and you can do all the hooting, and you can do all the hollering that you want, but the fact remains that there is a family that has been foreclosed on.

And I ask again: what must we do to make this point? How many must we bring in? Do we fill all the galleries up? That member, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has never come clean. He has never come clean with the people of Saskatchewan. How many families did you make homeless? How many families were caught in the 20 per cent and 21 per cent interest freeze? And nothing was done.

And I ask the member from Riversdale, I ask the Leader of the Opposition, the man who would be premier; the man who says, I am the farmers' friend; the man who says, trust me — I ask that man across: how much money did you make from the bank? How much money did you make from the foreclosing on this farm family?

I asked this gentleman, I asked him: what did it take to get you off the farm? He said, I fought, I fought with all the resources we had. I spent \$18,000 on legal fees, another 7 or \$8,000 for consultant fees. I put everything into it that I had to fight this Leader of the Opposition and to fight the bank. I spent \$25,000 in fighting.

(1530)

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this man spent \$25,000 trying to regain and to keep his farm, his family farm, how much did the lawyers for the bank, how much did the opposition member make on this deal? I ask him, as a winning lawyer, because they were successful — he is a good lawyer — did he make \$50,000 on one foreclosure? How many foreclosures have we got? I have a list of seven or eight. I have a list of foreclosures here that I have knowledge of. How many more were there, I ask the member. Come clean, quit your hypocrisy. Quit saying that you are for the small guy when you line your own pockets and feather your bed at the expense of Saskatchewan farm families. I say shame, shame. And this is the man who cares.

I, Mr. Speaker, have no hesitation, no hesitation whatever, in calling the Leader of the Opposition, the man who would be Premier, to order. He is in this House. He spoke in this debate. He slandered us. And that is fair game because I'm a back-bencher; I can defend myself. And my colleague can defend himself, and I'm sure that he will be able to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — This is the man who throws families off the farm. I say this is hypocrisy. Talk about tough love, Mr. Speaker. This man is tough all right, and he says, I care; trust me. Hypocrisy. Those men and ladies over there were caught, they were caught with their hands in the cookie jar. They were caught with their hands in their cookie jars, and now they are embarrassed, and they're trying to shout themselves to be heard.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can see why they're getting red about the ears. I can see why they are blushing. I can see . . . In fact, I would suggest that you're not only blushing around the ears, but that you're red all over. You're red all over. There's no anaemia there.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to invite the member from Riversdale, I'm going to invite the Leader of the Opposition, to meet Mr. Gaudet and his family after my remarks. I would like him to meet this family and discuss his concern of the Saskatchewan farm families, discuss the plan that he has to save the Saskatchewan farm families. Let's meet in the hall outside after my remarks, and let's just discuss this.

I would like the member from Riversdale to be able to meet this farm family face to face. They're not just figures; they're not just facts; they're not just a way to fatten one's bank account and then say, let me be leader. I want to be Premier, trust me.

Mr. Speaker, it is offensive. It is offensive to listen to a man that will do anything to get power. He will tell people almost anything, except the answers. And when he meets this couple and their family, is he going to answer by saying, well, you know, somebody had to do it, and it might as well come into my bank account as somebody else's. Or is he going to say, well now that I've been exposed, I've cut my tie with that bank; I'm not doing it any more. Sorry folks, trust me.

You weren't directly involved. Is that what he's going to say. Oh, I wasn't directly involved. It was my company that did it. It was some of our other lawyers that did the dirty work. Or is it going to be all of them, all of the above. Is he going to say, sorry, but trust me. I want to be your leader.

Mr. Speaker, it is offensive. It is offensive to listen to a man that will do anything to gain power. He will tell the people in hospital that they will be thrown out in the streets if they vote for a PC government. If they vote for a PC candidate in Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, he will frighten them as much he can.

He announced in the House on Thursday that he's going to tell the people that medicare will be destroyed, medicare will be destroyed. People will die, people will be sick with nowhere to go. That's the line of the NDP. They have to blackmail people into voting for them because the people cannot win. The NDP cannot win the confidence of the people any other way than through blackmail — the party of blackmail, the party of fear, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm going to go a step further, Mr. Speaker, and make a very blunt observation. Socialism is a policy and a philosophy that only wins through some kind of tyranny. There are some socialist countries where people actually take their life in their hands when they criticize. And in this province, Mr. Speaker, it is still in the tyranny of fear. It is even a tyranny that presents the face of death. I will never forget and I will never forgive the NDP, in the last federal election, telling the people literally that they would die if free trade came to pass.

Remember the commercial on TV, Mr. Speaker, remember the actor in a nurse's uniform telling Canadians that if free trade became a reality "entire families" — and that's a quote — "entire families" would be wiped out. Well, free trade has come to pass and the people are not dying in the streets. The NDP tried to use the tyranny of fear and they failed. And the member for Riversdale that he says that he is proud of his letter to the people of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg; he is proud of his tyranny of fear, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to ask for a page, please.

I want to make a point, Mr. Speaker, and I want to make this point abundantly clear. Thursday last, during the discussion when the Leader of the Opposition was making his reply to the address from the throne, an hon. member asked him — and it's recorded in **Hansard**, it's recorded in the **Hansard** — and the member asks on page 21, "What about your letter?" And I quote the Leader of the Opposition's answer. "I'm going to come to my letter in just a moment," he said.

He went through his entire speech. There was no mention of a letter. He made no mention of the letter. He did not address that concern, the letter for which the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg has thanked the Leader of the Opposition so graciously and allowing him to win the election thus. But I want to quote a little bit of a letter that the Leader of the Opposition sent to all the constituents in Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, and it begins . . . it's dated November 24, 1988, just approximately two and a half, three weeks prior to the by-election, and it says:

Dear Friends: The central issue of this Assiniboia-Gravelbourg by-election is the record of the PC government in Regina.

Do you notice that?

The Leader of the Opposition said the main thing in this election is the record of the PC government in Regina, but we fought that by-election on our record. We fought on our record. And I ask the people of Saskatchewan, in whom did the people of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg put their trust? — on the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg who is now my colleague.

And the letter goes on further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the Leader of the Opposition states:

And the latest PC proposal to close down all five hospitals in this constituency is unacceptable.

That's a quote, policy of fear. They're using fear, the fear of death in the minds of many people to win an election.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say:

The people of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg are telling me that they want to send a message to the PC government in Regina.

And are we grateful that they did, because along, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the message, they sent the

messenger, and again we are very, very grateful for that.

The message should be abundantly clear — tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

And that letter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is signed:

Yours sincerely, Roy Romanow, Leader of the Opposition.

I'm going to continue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on another letter. It's a letter that I also sent across to the member from Riversdale, the Leader of the Opposition. This letter is dated February 17, 1989. It's within two days of being two months after the election, after the by-election. And this letter is headed to a Mr. Maurice Filson, chairperson of the board, Lafleche Union Hospital.

Dear Mr. Filson: I am writing to you concerning your integrated facility hospital, which has been approved in principle. On behalf of the province of Saskatchewan, I am pleased to advise you that the planning process for your project can now proceed. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you well with the project and to thank you for your continued interest in improved services for Lafleche and district. (Signed by the Minister of Health.)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, two months after the election of the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, there is now a hospital going to be built in Lafleche.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the tyranny of fear, it does not work. But there is this letter; there is the matter of that threat that was handed down; there is a lack of an answer to that tyranny.

Now imagine that you are an elderly patient, Mr. Speaker, and you're in a hospital in that constituency, and the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg tells you that if you vote for a PC candidate, that your hospital will be closed, that you have no place to go. What will happen?

Well of course you're going to be frightened, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Of course you would. That's why this is such a reprehensible, unforgiveable tactic. In fact, the NDP have scared so many so often, have issued so many false alarms, have cried wolf so many times, that finally the people of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg has sent us one.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there's supposed to be some honour among people who would seek the trust of the people of Saskatchewan. In this Assembly we are required to refer to another as honourable members because it is a given — it's a given that you must have some honour to represent the people of Saskatchewan. It is not an honourable thing to go around blackmailing the sick, the elderly, and, in the words of the NDP leader himself, it's sickening. It's sickening that he would stand in this House and continue to do so.

And I'm going to make another blunt observation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe that it would be the honourable thing for that member to resign from this House and let someone else take over that party — someone who

understands the word honour, someone who understands that you do not engage in a tyranny of fear. Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe he should resign. Send him to Ottawa. I understand there may be an opening for him there. Send him back to the Bank of Nova Scotia. I understand he does well there.

Mr. Speaker, when the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg moved the address in reply, he suggested that we listen carefully to the remarks for the member from Riversdale to see if there would be any solutions. Well I took that advice; I listened very, very carefully. And what did he have to offer? Well he told us that he was opposed to public participation, but that he had flip-flopped from his position of 1982. He told us that he has flip-flopped on his concern for farm families, and again I ask him to meet with Mr. Gaudet after my remarks.

He has told us that he has changed his spots on all manners of issues, but he did not tell us one thing what he would do. He did not tell us, Mr. Speaker, how he would help farm families. He did not tell us how he would help families. He did not tell us how he would meet the challenges of the 1990s in trade, in economic development, in recovering the frail economy.

(1545)

He did not tell us how you would do anything, Mr. Speaker. I ask him, and I ask him plainly, what is your agriculture policy? And don't tell me you don't like it. You don't like anything that's not your own. And don't tell me that you would make it better. Tell me and the people of Saskatchewan how you would make it better. How? However you look at it, Mr. Speaker, his predicament is a little pathetic. No options, no policy, just hypocrisy and fear.

But let's talk about policy for a moment, Mr. Speaker. Here's what we know about NDP policy — the now famous leader's flip-flop policy. They are in favour of uranium mining and they are opposed to uranium mining. But trust me! They are in favour of a gas tax, yet they oppose a gas tax. They are in favour of Meech Lake, and they are opposed to Meech Lake. But the member from Riversdale says, trust me Canada, trust me Saskatchewan. Trust me!

And they are in favour of unrestricted abortion, but yet they oppose unrestricted abortion. They are in favour, Mr. Speaker, of the family farm, and they are opposed to the family farm. Trust me. Trust me, the Gaudet family. That's what they are saying — trust me.

And now we see, Mr. Speaker, that they are in favour of privatization, but they are opposed to public participation. We are witness to the destruction of a once great political institution, a political party that had creativity and energy, and today is represented by the politically ailing, the weak, the loud, and the hypocritical.

We are witness, we are witness to the intellectual bankruptcy of the NDP and the loss of faith of that party within the people of this province.

We are witness, Mr. Speaker, to a party that believes it can ride to power with fear alone and no policy to back it up.

And since, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP have no policy of their own, let's talk about the policy of this government. It's the policy of this government to encourage economic growth and diversification through public participation. And that's a pretty clear statement of policy, I would suggest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And perhaps the NDP might use it as a model on how they might develop their own policy.

But let me flesh it out a little bit; let me put some details on this policy. It is part of the government's public participation policy that employee ownership be a priority. We have seen that reflected in the sale of Saskatchewan Government Printing Company to its employees. And in the absence of any policy, the NDP simply oppose our policy, so they opposed the sale of their government printing company. Yet three months, three months before they were defeated in 1982, they established the Saskatchewan Holding and Reinvestment incorporation, SHAR.

And I would just like to take a look at a Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* article dated on March 2, 1988. In part, the article says that this is from the minutes of the Saskatchewan Crown Investment Corporation Directors meeting for January, 14, 1982.

The cabinet ministers of the day stamped their seal of approval on privatization. These were the elite of then Premier Allan Blakeney's NDP government.

Finance Minister of the time, the present member from Regina North East; Urban Affairs Minister, Walter Smishek; Environment Minister, Ted Bowerman; and Co-operations and Co-operatives Minister, Don Cody Ex-Highways Minister, Eiling Kramer also gave the nod. (And it goes on to say) If voters hadn't tossed Blakeney out of office just three months later, Saskatchewan's New Democrats likely would have led the world in privatization. In office, (it goes on) NDPers secretly plan to launch a massive privatization program. Out of office, they savaged their own ideas.

Today they opposed the sale of the government printing companies. They say that we have sold the company to our friends. Well, Mr. Speaker, I agree that the employees of the Saskatchewan printing company are my friends. I have yet to meet them, but I'm proud to call them friends, and I'm embarrassed that the NDP would disown them simply because they want to participate in the ownership of their own company. It rankles the NDP, it rankles the member from Saskatoon South, it just drives them up the wall that every single employee, every one, 100 per cent of the employees participated in the purchase of the printing company.

The NDP are totally unable to deal with the idea of employee ownership. They can't handle the idea that employees might like to own the business that they work for. They don't understand. They do not understand that

people naturally want to have a stake in their future, that they want to build it for themselves. So the member from Riversdale and his colleagues, his caucus, resort to insulting the employees. They result in calling them names, in calling them down.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I welcome those employees. I welcome them with open arms. But it is beyond my understanding why the NDP would reject them, reject them out of hand. And why, Mr. Speaker? Why is so important to the NDP that the government be in the printing business? It boggles my mind. Why is it so important that the government has to be in control of the printing business?

On that, Mr. Speaker, I find it strange how the NDP have framed this debate. Have you noticed? It's not surprising, but strange. They ask: why private ownership? Why private enterprise? Well, Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you, shouldn't the question be: why state ownership? And that is important, Mr. Speaker.

It's very important because it reflects what you think the norm should be. And the NDP wants this debate to be in terms of the norm being state ownership. Even the socialists of the world do not think that that should be the norm any more. From Sweden to Austria to Denmark to China, Soviet Union — all of them are questioning, why state ownership? They're all recognizing throughout the world, socialism is sick; socialism is dying; socialism cannot sustain itself.

Why would Saskatchewan want to go back to the '70s? Why would the people of this province vote for a party that wants to relegate them to a back seat on this train that is heading along and advancing in the economy of the world? Why, I ask? It doesn't make sense.

An Hon. Member: — It's the only way they can control them, if they keep them ignorant.

Mr. Neudorf: — My colleague from Regina Wascana hit it on the nose. It's the only way that they can control the people.

I suggest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the NDP is hanging on to their **Regina Manifesto**. They are hanging on to the glory days of the 1960s. They are hanging on to an ideology that is obsolete. The world is changing. The world is changing, but not they.

So I ask, why should the government be involved in a printing company? I look also, I look further, to the sale of the Meadow Lake pulp mill, or the Meadow Lake Sawmill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the NDP say that the government sold the mill to its friends. And I say to the employees of the saw mill, and I say to the Indian bands that purchased that saw mill, that I welcome you as my friends. I do not know why the NDP would not want you as their friends, but I welcome you.

And I say to the employees of WESTBRIDGE, I welcome you as my friends. And speaking of WESTBRIDGE and friends, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to bring to your attention how the NDP think that they can make friends. You will remember about a year ago that the member

from Battlefords stunned and offended the entire province when he tried to blackmail the Battleford's chamber of commerce into being his friend, and he told them . . .

An Hon. Member: — I remember that.

Mr. Neudorf: — You remember that?

An Hon. Member: — Yes.

Mr. Neudorf: — The people of Saskatchewan remember that.

An Hon. Member: — And the people of North Battleford will never forget it.

Mr. Neudorf: — The people of North Battleford remember that. And he told them: I'm going to be in cabinet some day, so better be my friend, or else. Policy of fear; policy of intimidation. Well, Mr. Speaker, he never learned; the NDP never learns.

At an occasion last week that is intended for non-partisan fellowship, the Premier's dinner, it wasn't bad enough that the NDP booed the Consul General of the United States, the Lieutenant Governor's speech. That wasn't bad enough; that wasn't boorish enough. They had to engage further in their favourite friendship game of blackmail.

The member for The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, met an employee of the WESTBRIDGE Computer Corporation, and he said to that employee: we are going to be in government, so you'd better be friends with us. He also told the WESTBRIDGE employee, and I quote: you'd better do business with me. And the two exchanged business cards and separated.

This is how the NDP makes friends, Mr. Speaker, through blackmail and intimidation. And I say, shame. I say shame on them and shame on the member from Battleford because he had better realize, as my caucus colleagues were saying, the people of Battlefords do not accept this kind of behaviour, and shame on his leader for allowing something like that to happen and not to keep it in line.

And I have a message for that member, Mr. Speaker, a clear message, and that is that he and his gang will not be government, and the people of Battleford are going to have the final say as to whether you are going to be in this Assembly again.

The NDP says that we sold a computer company to our friends, and I say welcome to those new friends. We on this side do not need blackmail. When the NDP thinks employees are not worthy of friendship, why they would do that I do not know.

I do not believe you and WESTBRIDGE, or in the printing company or in the Meadow Lake Sawmill or in any of the others, I do not believe the NDP when they say that you are bad people trying to destroy the province, trying to destroy medicare, trying to destroy anything. I believe you are good, decent people who want opportunities for

your families, good futures for your children, and I congratulate you on your initiative, your effort, and your confidence in this great province.

(1600)

And I say to the Gaudet family, I welcome you as my friends. And I say to all the families in Saskatchewan, to all the farm families in the province, I consider you my friends. And I will say to you that I and this government will do everything possible not to let you down. And why the member from Riversdale would treat you with spite and go after your family farm, well, he can explain that in person. But I will welcome you, and every member of this government will welcome you. After he has savaged and ravaged and brutalized these families, he says, trust me, trust me.

This province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was not built by attacking people the way the NDP do. It was not built on the concepts of divide and conquer, as they've tried. It was not built by politicians who lacked the courage to tell people where they stood on issues. And I can say this, Mr. Speaker — everyone knew where Tommy Douglas stood. Everyone knew where John Diefenbaker stood.

But I ask the people of Saskatchewan and anyone who is listening, take a moment and think; take a moment and think and ask yourself, where does the leader of the NDP stand? No one knows. He is hiding. The leader of the NDP is hiding. The great Houdini of the Saskatchewan legislature. Now you see him; now you don't.

He first hid behind his party and said that the convention would speak for him. The convention has come and gone. Then he said he was too busy fighting a federal election. The federal election has come and gone. Then he said, wait until after the Assiniboia-Gravelbourg by-election. That has come and gone. Then he hid behind the legislature and said, wait until the opening of the House. The House has opened; he has spoken. And did we hear a word of policy. Nothing. Then he said, once the House is open . . . well just one more minute, I have to form a task force. I have to form a task force.

In spring when we commissioned the health Commission on Directions in Health Care, what was the NDP answer? We don't need task forces; they are a waste of time. We tried it once 10 years ago. What does the Leader of the Opposition do? Flip-flop. Did he establish one task force? No. Two task forces? No. Three? No. He established five, five task forces to go around the province. And he is still in hiding. He says we must wait. We must wait for these task forces to come back, then we will develop a policy.

Well the people have given him time to come out of hiding. The people have listened with close attention and they have hoped that a leader in this province might show some courage, and they have hoped in vain, Mr. Speaker. This man is the most adept in hiding. He hides from the people and seeks excuses. And his response to the throne speech can be characterized as nothing . . . I was going to say nothing less than disappointing, but I think I'll come to a full stop.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — His MLAs are bound to continue the tradition of hiding. They will continue character assassination. And somehow I feel, Mr. Speaker, that after I sit down and after I give up my place in this Assembly, that I might be a target for this type of filibuster. That is all right, I'm prepared for that. But in the words of a famous rabbit, Mr. Speaker: two half-nothings make a whole nothing. And all the half-nothings of the characters across the floor make a whole nothing.

And I say again, in closing, to the member for Riversdale, I suggest to you that quit hanging out the member from Humboldt to dry. I ask again, what is your agriculture policy? A whole nothing, Mr. Speaker.

But I suggest to you that this throne speech is a whole plan, a complete vision for the future, and I will be supporting it with all of my conviction. It has a plan for the future and not an obsession with the past. It provides for increased protection of rural farm families; it provides for advances in health and education; it provides protection for children and families. It addresses the environment fully and effectively; it focuses on trade and economic development; it prepares the way for the year 2000, Mr. Speaker. And I, this anaemic, atrophied member of the legislature, am proud to vigorously support it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the critic for seniors' issues and as an MLA for Saskatoon, I've been eagerly awaiting this opportunity to respond to the throne speech.

But first of all I comment on the remarks made by the member from Rosthern who's obviously been appointed a keynote speaker for the PC government. And I was shocked by the viciousness of his speech. Perhaps I shouldn't be shocked by it, Mr. Speaker, because he represents the most corrupt government in the history of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — In nearly one hour of haranguing, he spent two minutes defending the throne speech in this throne speech debate. He can't defend the government policies; that's why he had nothing to say. Those government policies can't be defended, and I was shocked to hear the member from Rosthern talk about gall and then talk about freedom of speech in this legislature. That's the government opposite that's failed to call this legislature into session in nine months. We have had no opportunity to speak in this legislature for nine months and he very self-righteously says he supports freedom of speech. And when he was in the legislature nine months ago, he and the back-benchers in the government opposite had very little to say, very little to say.

The government opposite has failed to call the legislature into session in nine months. They failed to speak when they were in here, and they have failed to consult with the people of Saskatchewan both when the legislature was sitting and from the times in between.

It's a government in hiding, Mr. Speaker. They won't talk to people and we will. We'll meet with the farmers any time; we'll meet with all the people in Saskatchewan any time. And we are also meeting with the constituents of the government constituencies opposite whom they will not deal with.

They're phoning us and they're coming to us to talk because that government will not speak to them. That's how much that government values freedom of speech and values its constituents. And I want to register again my shock at the comments and the member for Rosthern.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want first of all to say that as the member for Saskatoon Centre I am going to be deeply affected by the election boundaries changes as Saskatoon Centre is proposed to be broken into three pieces. And while I have only served one term in this legislature, I have served the people of Saskatoon Centre with pride and with deep honour in representing those people. And what I say here today and what I've said in the past has been a reflection of what the constituents have said to me.

Even though the seats will be changing, I will continue to be an MLA from Saskatoon, and I will continue to be in the legislature after the next election, but I will be on the government side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the throne speech the other day, this Chamber began to take on an Alice-in-Wonderland quality and I felt like I was Anne-in-Wonderland because, like Alice, we were encountering a series of strange characters and all of them had something to say but very little of it made any sense. Like being at the Mad Hatter's tea party, Mr. Speaker, it's the same with this throne speech.

Reality has been warped and the result is bizarre to say the least. Through the Looking Glass, the smoke and the mirrors, the PC government's version of reality is weird and it's frightening, Mr. Speaker.

The throne speech is obviously a poor attempt by a cruel government to cloak itself in sincerity. It's an obvious attempt by a scandalous government to dress itself up in respectability. And it's a failed attempt by a corrupt government to cover itself with credibility.

But I say, Mr. Speaker, that this speech does not pull the wool over anyone's eyes. The people of Saskatchewan are not that gullible, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Saskatchewan have come to recognize the wolves in sheep's clothing. And the people of Saskatchewan now know that no matter how hard this government tries to disguise its intentions, it is a callous, corrupt, and conniving gang of pirates.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Smart: — And no matter how hard the PC government tries to pretend to be what it is not, the people of Saskatchewan see it for what it really is. The mantles of sincerity, respectability, and credibility have fallen off this government, Mr. Speaker, and the emperor has no

clothes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to look at the section of the speech called "Quality of Life," because that refers to seniors, and seniors are approximately 20 per cent of the voters in this province. Seniors are the people who have built up this province. And the seniors are one of the largest groups in the province who have already been attacked viciously by the wolves in sheep's clothing, the PC government opposite.

So when seniors hear the government say in the throne speech, and I quote, "My minister's efforts to protect senior citizens will continue," when they hear the government say that, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what the seniors do. They run for cover. They grab their hard hats and they cringe.

Does this government believe for one moment that the destruction of the prescription drug plan protected senior citizens? The senior citizens know that it didn't protect them. The destruction of the drug plan has caused and it continues to cause tremendous hardship and stress on seniors, especially the many seniors in this province who live on fixed incomes.

The PC government allows the cost of drugs to seniors to sky-rocket and then it abuses them by calling them drug abusers. Some protection that is! I assure you that no senior wants that kind of effort to protect them to continue, Mr. Speaker. Not at all. They want that kind of effort to stop, and to stop right now.

Now the government says in its throne speech that it's committed to building more enriched housing units for seniors. And if these are subsidized units, Mr. Speaker, that's fine, but the reality is that the PC government is emphasizing what it calls innovative housing for seniors. And this is the program where the PC government is allowing public money to be spent on housing schemes that charge seniors anywhere from 60,000 to close to \$100,000 for what's called a life-lease apartment. And on top of that they have to pay monthly maintenance fees. Only a few of these units are subsidized. Those on low income who can't get into them, have to go elsewhere or they're out of luck.

Innovative, enriched housing is really housing for a few enriched seniors. It is not housing for the majority of seniors. So I ask you, what kind of protection is that, Mr. Speaker?

An Hon. Member: — None.

(1615)

Ms. Smart: — Right. It's no protection at all. That's what it is — it's none at all.

And what's happening in nursing homes? The PC government has consistently failed to provide adequate staffing needs. And I've heard many stories of people who have been hurt and who are concerned about the level of staffing needs in the nursing homes. Some protection that is, Mr. Speaker.

This PC government wants us to think that it cares about families. Well shortly after I was elected, I got a distressed phone call from a senior who told me that the government was forcing her to get divorced to help cover the costs of her husband's nursing care and her own living expenses. And I looked into it, of course, because I couldn't believe it.

But it turned out not to be a divorce, but what's called an involuntary separation. And it's made necessary so that that couple could get more income as two single people, from the guaranteed income supplement, than they could get as a couple. She, like many seniors living on low income, needed every penny she was entitled to. But to her, the government was telling her to get a divorce.

And there are many seniors who are suffering from this forced separation. It feels to them like they're abandoning their mate, their mate of many years. And some of the seniors won't do it. They don't want to have to go through that sort of process. And so they're forced to struggle on less income, as the costs of the goods and services that they have to buy, escalate.

They escalate because of the government's policies, Mr. Speaker. The government's policies are not controlling the cost of goods and services. So what kind of protection is that? That's no protection.

And on top of all this, the PC government's actions are systematically destroying the programs and the services which the seniors themselves have worked so hard for so long to build up in this province. The gang of demolition experts opposite are not building on the co-operative foundation of this province; they are jackhammering it into oblivion.

Mr. Speaker, the gang of demolition experts opposite are swinging their wrecking ball of privatization against the very social structures which the seniors themselves have created. And they are dynamiting not only the history of this province, but the future of Saskatchewan. And that's how this government protects senior citizens, Mr. Speaker.

And I say, with the seniors of this province, spare us from any more of your bulldozing. Spare us from your sledge-hammers. And above all, spare us from any more of your destructive protection.

But unfortunately there's more bad news in the throne speech for the seniors of this province. After cutting off the funding to the senior citizen volunteer projects like the evergreen neighbourly services in Saskatoon and the services for seniors in Regina and drastically reducing the power of the seniors provincial council — in fact, the term that's been used has been emasculated, for the provincial council — this government says, and I quote from the throne speech:

My ministers will encourage seniors to participate actively in various community activities and will provide them with the opportunity to contribute whenever possible.

That is just a prime example of the patronizing, arrogant

attitude of this government towards the people of Saskatchewan. And I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that those seniors who enjoy good health and that have transportation and they have extra spending money, they're already participating actively in this province. They are already contributing and they have done so for years, and they will continue to do so in spite of the attacks of the PC government opposite.

Seniors all over this province have been telling me, Mr. Speaker, that the PC government doesn't encourage seniors; it discourages them. It doesn't provide them with opportunities; it destroys opportunities, not only for seniors, but for the majority of people in Saskatchewan. In the throne speech the government said, and I quote again:

The protection of individuals, families, and children is the foundation upon which my government's policy agenda is built.

But there is no protection of ordinary people, young or old, in this government's policy agenda. There is no foundation to build on. If this government's policy foundation is on any foundation at all, it's a foundation of quicksand, and you can't build on that.

This government bulldozed the children's school-based dental plan. It demolished the prescription drug plan, Mr. Speaker. It dynamited our financial security and it's buried us under a huge deficit.

And I say, what arrogance for the Devine government to claim that it is protecting people. That claim won't wash with the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. They see the fangs beneath the façade, and they feel the bite every time there's an announcement of more job losses in this province. And there have been many such announcements in the last few months, Mr. Speaker, many such announcements.

But what did this government say? It says not to worry. It says its privatization scheme is going to take care of all that. And yet the more the province privatizes, the more we lose jobs — 25 per cent of the workers lost from Saskoil, workers losing their jobs all the time in Saskatchewan. The privatization scheme doesn't work one bit to support job creation in this province.

An Hon. Member: — Unless you're a Tory cabinet minister, defeated.

Ms. Smart: — Right. For a few people it's working. The patronage system works, but the solid job creation does not work.

In the throne speech the Devine government says that the economic development and diversification of Saskatchewan will contribute to the development of families and children as priorities. Now when I heard that, Mr. Speaker, I wondered what would happen if I took that message back to the brewery workers at the Carling O'Keefe plant in Saskatoon Centre. I've met with those brewery workers. I know how heart-broken they are about the announcement that the Carling O'Keefe plant is going to close. I know how worried they are. I know how

anxious they are, and what stress they're under.

Do you think for one moment that you could fool them with that kind of pap if I was to tell them that? They work at a plant which is based on economic diversification. The Carling O'Keefe plant, the brewery industry, processes what we produce here in Saskatchewan, right here in this province, and it's going down the drain.

The Carling O'Keefe plant was recently renovated. It's a business that paid good wages so the workers could afford families and mortgages on their homes and the cost of goods and services. Mr. Speaker, it's good jobs that protect individuals and families and children.

And yet, what did this Devine government do? It turns its back on families by supporting job lay-offs. The Cory workers, the potash workers, are another good example. And it scoffs at people when they protest this cruel treatment, and it fails to implement policies which would provide real protection.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are going to see the Carling O'Keefe plant in Saskatoon Centre gutted of its equipment and bulldozed into a parking lot. And that's how the Devine government builds up Saskatchewan. And we are going to see more workers forced into those mickey mouse job retraining programs which lead to work at minimum wage if there's any work at all. That's how the Devine government protects workers. And we are going to see more and more people leaving this province. That's how the Devine government develops the economy.

And I find it very cruel, and I find it very distressing to meet with the workers such as those of the brewery workers and the people in the canned drinks industry and all the others who've lost their jobs, and look them in the eye and realize what it means, that they have to face the kind of system that this government is putting in place.

But what does the throne speech say about the overriding problem of unemployment and of job loss? It says nothing. It's silent. The silence is deafening. It's terribly cruel.

And what does the throne speech say about the problems faced by the urban areas like Saskatoon when hundreds of people lose their jobs? The mayor of Saskatoon has expressed his concern about the closing of the Carling O'Keefe factory.

What does this government say about the loss of our municipal tax base when people's incomes fall so sharply and so drastically? Nothing. It's silence in the throne speech about this mammoth problem that's facing Saskatchewan. There's no hint in the throne speech of concern about the problems facing our cities, our towns, our villages.

Mr. Speaker, these communities desperately need support from the provincial government. They need support for jobs and for workers. They need support for transportation costs, for sewer costs, for roads, for sidewalks, for all the urban infrastructure that's necessary even in the smallest communities — support from the provincial government so that the costs will be kept

down, so that municipal governments don't have to increase the service costs and the property taxes and put that burden on the people of the province, particularly the people on fixed incomes and low incomes.

These costs hurt seniors, Mr. Speaker, and they hurt families. They hurt communities. And they don't protect them; they don't protect them at all. But the PC government sits back and does nothing while the communities suffer. The PC government sits back and does nothing while good-paying jobs are lost and the families lose their homes.

And then the government attacks these same families if they go on social assistance. And with the proposed changes to The Labour Standards Act, it attacks these same families if they do find a job at minimum wage.

Attack, attack, attack, Mr. Speaker. That's the Devine government's foundation for its policy agenda — nothing else. It's certainly not the protection of families. It's not at all the protection of families.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know from talking to people in this province that a great deal of the burden of the Devine government's policy of attack is falling on women. Many family lives are being wrecked, and many children are hurt and hungry, and that is a reality in Saskatchewan — one of the realities that the throne speech did not touch on at all.

Women have to be able to participate in the paid labour force, but we suffer continuing discrimination and we earn much less than men. And yet the PC government refuses to implement pay equity legislation. It refuses to support strong labour standards which would help women and men. And it refuses to support the requirements for good quality child care.

And the PC government forces single-parent women to go back to work when their babies are only four months old. And I wonder how many people are aware of that particular little burden that the Minister of Social Services has put on the people — and I say little, only because it hasn't received the spotlight of attention. But it is not little for the women who are struggling to find care for their infants, because when the babies are four months old those single-parent women are defined as employable, and their incomes are cut and they're told, go out and find work. That's really looking after children and families.

That is really shocking, Mr. Speaker. And I think that people all over the province should realize what this government is doing when it does things like that; when there is so little support for children and for women, that women with babies only four months old are put on the work-for-welfare programs that the Minister of Social Services loves to brag about. It's a forced labour camp for those women, Mr. Speaker, nothing more.

There's very little infant day care in this province, and anyway I don't think that women, when their babies are four months old, should be forced out to the work place like that. They've already got a full-time job looking after their children, and we must value that parenting as work and make sure that people get adequate incomes to do

that work properly.

If this government thinks that taking families who are living on social assistance and giving them nutrition education is going to solve the problem, they are really in Alice-in-Wonderland, Mr. Speaker, because what will solve that problem is a guaranteed adequate income to those families. And what will solve that problem is having a government, which a New Democratic government would be, that recognizes the value of parenting and that puts in place real support systems for that hard work and that very important work.

(1630)

Mr. Speaker, the burden that farm women carry is incredible, as they work on the farm, off the farm, and as care givers to their families. And, young and old, women are the army of volunteers who keep our communities running, Mr. Speaker, and women everywhere carry the lion's share of the burden as primary care givers.

And now, more than ever, women are being forced to pick up all the services dropped by this uncaring PC government, from children with special needs to health care and home care for seniors.

The women know that this is what is happening to them. And women know that they've always been dedicated workers and care givers, and that we will continue to be. But I say, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot be used as beasts of burden, carrying all the extra work generated by the Devine government's failure to support adequate social services.

Every time I hear the government brag about how it will use volunteers to carry out essential services, I know the women of this province are being targeted for yet more pressure, to pick up the pieces from a corrupt government that chooses to fund scandalous patronage rather than provide decent, living wages for useful public service, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to my last point. In the throne speech, the Tory government wolves appear to be trying to hide themselves behind our New Democratic economic policies, referring to our history of co-operative ownership in business, community involvement, and the delivery of public services as if they valued it. They do not, Mr. Speaker.

The Tory government's action and policies have clearly indicated that the kind of co-operation it supports is co-operation with international business interests — and I refer you to the Carling O'Keefe plant for one. Molson's Australian is what we have now in Canada. The total thrust of the PC government's decisions has been to demolish both the co-operative system and the public system of ownership.

Their scheme to give away our resources to foreign interests shows how little they value the long history of struggle against such foreign control, a struggle which this province has undertaken very successfully in the past and will have to engage in in the future. And we will continue to do this under a New Democratic government.

Mr. Speaker, there is no caring in this throne speech, and there is no compassion in this throne speech, and there is no comprehension of the reality of the lives of the majority of Saskatchewan people.

The gang of demolition experts opposite are no friends of Saskatchewan, and they are no builders of Saskatchewan, and they are no protectors of individuals, families, or children in Saskatchewan. They have earned our contempt and our ridicule by their bizarre postures.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the day when a New Democratic government, working with the people of this province, will restore true democracy and build a better tomorrow for all of us. It will be a tomorrow based on an economic policy of real support for co-operatives, for small business, and for public ownership here in Saskatchewan; a New Democratic government that will work with the people to develop strong support systems and real security, opportunity, and protection of both our past and our future, our young and our old, our families, our communities, and our beloved province.

Mr. Speaker, obviously I will be voting against the throne speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sauder: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm humbled today, Mr. Speaker, with the opportunity, indeed with the honour and the privilege of being able to rise in this Assembly and to endorse the excellent throne speech which was delivered last week by Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor.

I'd be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I did not take this opportunity to extend my warmest congratulations to Her Honour on her appointment as Lieutenant Governor for the province of Saskatchewan. Hers is a vital role in the smooth operation of our democratic process and a role as steeped in tradition as the Legislative Assembly itself. I trust that she will find her new position a challenge, yet at the same time a richly rewarding experience.

My first speech this session, Mr. Speaker, must begin with the acknowledgement that it is a special privilege to be representing the good people of the Nipawin constituency, and I wish to thank them for their strong support which permits me to represent them in this legislature. I want to assure those people that I will continue to listen to their concerns and their ideas, and I will make sure that they will be heard where it counts.

While it is a special privilege to represent this constituency, it is, too, an honour and a privilege to be a representative of the Progressive Conservative Government of Saskatchewan. This government, Mr. Speaker, has displayed great vision in the building of our province. It's introduced innovative and effective programs that benefit every resident of the province, and I think of some recent examples.

In the field of health care, for instance, the new plastic health care card. It's surprising how many comments that we've heard in the short time that it's been in place as to

how effective it is, how efficient it's made the program, and the good that it's doing. And also, to read the letters from pharmacists and others who are telling us that the people who are coming in with double prescriptions and who are being challenged on that, who've been using the system for their own means and abusing the system, Mr. Speaker, and it's helping to deal with that problem.

Mr. Speaker, in the field of education we've had changes to the core curriculum, another example of changes that this government's made to improve the services for the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, a part of that vision, a great part of the vision of this government, is recognizing the special needs of rural Saskatchewan as an integral part of the successful future of our province. Prior to 1982, Mr. Speaker, the residents of rural Saskatchewan apparently had no voice in the government. They were not listened to. Their concerns were not heard. They seemed to be considered unimportant and not worthwhile.

However, after 1982, once this government came to power, the voices of the people of rural Saskatchewan were finally heard. Their concerns were addressed, and addressed in various areas, not only in the agriculture sector but in various areas that affected them.

Several of those areas that I'd like to draw attention to, first of all, would be the educational initiatives, Mr. Speaker. We're working more and more towards a highly technological society. This government is making sure that the people of rural Saskatchewan have the same opportunities for education as all other residents.

For instance, Mr. Speaker, the first phase of the reorganization of the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology and the regional colleges is over. The major provider of skilled training in university courses in rural Saskatchewan is a system of eight regional colleges in the southern part of the province, and the Northlands Career College in the North.

I'd like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan regional colleges are unique in their service, their brokerage and collaboration with the two universities and Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology. One of the main intentions of this government in changing the college mandate was the ultimate benefit of rural residents.

Mr. Speaker, as we look at the results beginning to come in, I think we can say that indeed that mandate is being met. And as I met with the people of the community college in my area over these past several months, I find that they're very pleased and very excited with the changes in the direction that they're heading in that program.

But that's not all in education, Mr. Speaker. A new era is opening up with the application of distance education technology by which people across the province can be reached through very sophisticated programming. We are just embarking on the development and implementation of the Saskatchewan Communications Advanced Network program which will be the most

important development since the beginning of those colleges.

Mr. Speaker, it's going to put educational programming at the disposal of Saskatchewan citizens in their own communities where they don't have to leave to participate in formal education, but are able to have it in their home areas and to get it without leaving a job. They can take it while still being employed or being at home. I'm proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have been a part of the government that has brought this opportunity to the people of this province and to my constituency.

Another major concern of the residents of rural Saskatchewan is the future of health care. Well I can say that this government is indeed working to ensure that the future health care needs of rural Saskatchewan will continue to be met. Health care is a top priority of this government, and the Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care is an example of that.

In June of 1988, the Premier of this province appointed the commission to conduct a review of the Saskatchewan health care system. One-third of that commission's focus is on community services. The commission has investigated a full range of issues impacting on the quality, availability, accessibility, cost of health care services, paying particular attention, Mr. Speaker, to the differences between rural and urban communities.

Some of the challenges the commission is addressing are an ageing population, increasing public expectations, trends toward increased urbanization, accessibility for rural Saskatchewan, and the distribution and availability of health care professionals.

And in order for all Saskatchewan residents to have a say in the future of health care in this province, meetings were held in various areas to encourage the input of our Saskatchewan residents. Mr. Speaker, I view that as a very real commitment to the future of health care. The people from my constituency who participated in the hearings when they were in that part of the province were very appreciative of the process and of the opportunity that had been afforded to them to make their views known and to see that somebody was interested and was listening to their concerns. It's a commitment to every Saskatchewan resident and, indeed, to the special needs of rural people.

Mr. Speaker, the government of this province recognizes that the issues governing the future of rural Saskatchewan cover a wide range of areas. For instance, many of the people of rural Saskatchewan have never had access to a pension plan to help plan for their retirement years. Well this government responded to that need with the Saskatchewan pension plan, the first of its kind in North America. Mr. Speaker, for the first time, home-makers, employees of small business, farm families who are not covered by any pension plan have been provided with the opportunity to contribute to a voluntary pension plan. The Saskatchewan pension plan has been enthusiastically embraced by the people of this province, and rural residents, I believe, have been the most enthusiastic in their support of that program.

Out of the more than 48,000 people enrolled in the plan, 57 per cent are from communities with a population of less than 5,000 rural residents. Fifty-seven per cent, Mr. Speaker, certainly tells me that there was a great need for this plan in rural Saskatchewan.

But more than that, Mr. Speaker, this plan has helped bring equality to a lot of other people as well. Ninety-two per cent of the applicants are women. Over 65 per cent of our contributors are over the age of 50. Fifty per cent are home-makers; 20 per cent are part-time workers — people who didn't have an opportunity to contribute to a pension plan in their place of work or because of not being employed outside of the home. Those figures prove to me, Mr. Speaker, that there was a genuine and great need, and I believe it's a need that's been successfully addressed by this government.

(1645)

Mr. Speaker, when this government was elected in 1982, the people of rural Saskatchewan knew that they were not being treated fairly by our predecessors. These people had to deal daily with substandard service, service from government utilities such as SaskPower, SaskTel. They didn't have access to the same services available in the urban centres. For instance, they had to devote large amounts of their family income to more inefficient energy sources like oil and propane as their alternatives for heating and on their farms.

Mr. Speaker, these people knew that the technology was there for alternative services to be made available to them. The question was: why wasn't it? Well, their opinion was that it was because the government that was there was not concerned about their needs and didn't care to respond to them. However, when this government was elected, it responded to those concerns of the rural residents. It responded with individual line service, rural underground power, and rural natural gas programs.

By 1990, Mr. Speaker, approximately 74,000 rural Saskatchewan homes will have private telephone lines. Once that program is complete, Saskatchewan will be one of the first jurisdictions in North America to convert to a universal private line system. Mr. Speaker, those individuals will benefit from individual line service and the privacy — no more party lines.

He'll benefit from the convenience — there won't be waiting for the telephone line to be free. He'll benefit from a full access to a wide range of communication services and products that were never before available to him. They'll now have access to custom features: electronic mail; national and international data transmission; products such as extension phones, cordless telephones, telephone answering machines, telephone sets that can handle both voice and data transmissions. Individual line service opens a door of opportunity for farm families, Mr. Speaker. They can now use computers in their operations as part of the telephone service. They can also receive information on markets and prices. They can gain access to numerous other sources of helpful information.

Mr. Speaker, to date this Government of Saskatchewan

has spent \$141 million bringing the residents of rural Saskatchewan the same benefits enjoyed by their urban counterparts in telephone use alone. By 1990, that amount will have reached \$264 million and, as I said before, almost 74,000 Saskatchewan homes will have benefitted.

Another program that is in direct response to the needs of rural residents is the rural underground electrical lines. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, our entire single wire overhead system will be replaced with underground facilities. That means important advantages for our rural families, Mr. Speaker. Farm safety will be improved with the removal of the potential overhead hazard of high voltage lines. Farming operations will become more convenient when poles are removed from their fields. And Mr. Speaker, service reliability will be increased and maintenance costs will be reduced as the lines become protected from Saskatchewan's severe weather conditions.

Mr. Speaker, the individual line service program, the rural underground service electric program are working simultaneously with another program this government responded to the direct needs of rural Saskatchewan with. Prior to 1982, Mr. Speaker, residents of rural Saskatchewan had no option but to heat their homes with oil or propane. Well, because of our natural gas distribution program initiated by this Progressive Conservative government, and implemented I might add, over the opposition of members opposite, over the derision of those members opposite, farms and small communities across the province have access to a more convenient, less expensive heating fuel.

Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that in one year a family converting from propane to natural gas heating saves 40 per cent of their previous cost. Those converting from oil heat can expect to reduce their costs by half, and that is a significant cost for many of our rural residents.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, it hasn't only been a benefit to the rural part of the province, but this initiative has created enormous spin-off benefits in the plumbing and heating industry, the transportation industry, pipe and materials manufacturing, heavy machinery purchases, and the service industry such as hotels, restaurants, and service stations.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of my constituency tell me that they are concerned about the role of rural life in this fast-changing world. They also tell me that they appreciate these programs that this government has initiated — the rural natural gas, the individual line service.

But, Mr. Speaker, because of those initiatives, I can go back and say that yes, this government is working to ensure that rural Saskatchewan remains competitive, that it can continue to survive and to thrive.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of Nipawin constituency know that their voices have been heard. They know that we're committed to ensuring the viability of rural Saskatchewan. We've shown it by our actions, not just by our words.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the members opposite what they did for rural Saskatchewan when they were in power. I'd like to ask those same members exactly what their platform for rural Saskatchewan is today. It seems to me they've been silent. They're thinking about it. Perhaps they want to go back to what they had before. They're just not quite sure. They'd have to set up a task force and check it out. I'd like to suggest that they can't answer those questions. They can't answer them because they don't have a cohesive policy for the survival of rural Saskatchewan.

The only policy that I have seen come forth from the members opposite, I'm sorry to say, in almost seven years in this Legislature, is a policy of attack and criticize; nothing positive put forward as alternatives to provide for the needs of rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the examples I've given of this government's commitment to bring equality to and ensuring the viability of rural Saskatchewan, I'd like to suggest that the members opposite cannot compete.

Mr. Speaker, there's a saying that one person with a belief is worth 99 with a reason. I think we see on this side of the House many members with a belief, many members who put their beliefs into action. They don't have reasons why it can't be done, but we've shown that it can be done.

We believe in rural Saskatchewan, and we believe that the success of all of Saskatchewan rests on keeping that part of our province alive. And I think that the Speech from the Throne outlines the commitment we have to leading this province to being the best that we can. This throne speech makes a commitment to our environment, for instance, an issue that's on many people's minds as they have a concern to see that we have quality environment left to the future generations in this province. And this government has made commitments to that.

Mr. Speaker, they're appreciative of the programs that we put in place last year to deal with the problems of rural Saskatchewan, the drought, the small communities, the individuals. We had enhanced drought relief programs that were there to provide ongoing source of supply of water or to provide for those in the future.

In my work with the water corporation I meet with many people who are appreciative of the initiatives of this government in helping to see that those problems don't re-occur, that the impact of them is lessened in their communities. They're appreciative of the initiatives of this government in the field of irrigation and this stable economy that it helps to provide in those areas that have access to that. They appreciate what we've done.

Mr. Speaker, this throne speech has made commitments to increased protection and assistance to the family farms. Mr. Speaker, it's made commitments to strengthening our health care system and our education system — help for the real people of Saskatchewan, for the rural people as well as the urban, and I'm proud to be a part of the government that has put this throne speech forward. Mr. Speaker, I fully endorse it, and I would urge every sincere member of this House to endorse it. It's a document that

clearly shows the way to the future of this great province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the applause, but I note that it's five minutes before 5, and my remarks will go for considerably longer than five minutes, and I wonder if I might have leave to call it 5 o'clock.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.