

EVENING SITTING

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTIONS

*Amendments to Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Andrew.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, I know that members opposite would not want to conclude consideration of this until they have heard all of my comments. I briefly considered letting this go, but I could see there was a popular demand that crossed the way, Mr. Speaker, for a few tightly knit sentences on this subject, so I'll continue in that fashion.

Mr. Speaker, before supper, before 5 o'clock, it was suggested that given this government's shoddy behaviour, given its lack of integrity, given its penchant for breaking its promises, the fashion in which it has dealt with us, we can't deal with this group on the basis of trust. And if we were to abolish the bell-ringing rule, we would, in fact, have to do that. That basis simply does not exist.

We don't trust them in their dealings with us; we certainly don't trust them with respect to the management of this province's affairs. And if the bell-ringing is done away with, they have a virtual free hand.

Normally, Mr. Speaker, these sort of problems are self correcting. As I was saying, normally public opinion brings itself to bear on a government, they respond, and by and large, Mr. Speaker, this institution has served the public and the people of Saskatchewan fairly well.

But that has not been the case with respect to this administration. They have proceeded to fly in the face of public opinion and done an enormous amount of damage in the process. Their management of public affairs is such that no one would trust them; no one would want to give them the kind of free rein which an abolition of the bell-ringing will do.

With an abolition of the bell-ringing, Mr. Speaker, this government can do whatever it would like. We have no effective means of stopping them, given the party discipline that exists in all legislatures at this time.

Mr. Speaker, we . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Why does it work every place else?

**Mr. Shillington:** — Well because nobody else has a government like this one, I say to the member from Kindersley.

There is not, Mr. Speaker . . . The member from Kindersley raises an excellent question. He says, why does it work everywhere else? Mr. Speaker, there isn't another government in Canada that operates in the fashion in which these people do.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — Nobody else, Mr. Speaker. No other government came into office with balanced books, with no deficit — no operating deficit — proceeded to run up a \$4 billion deficit.

Nobody else, Mr. Speaker, promised to abolish, not one, but the two major taxes in the province and proceeded to do so without any worry about the consequences. Nobody else, Mr. Speaker, solemnly promised there would be no privatization of utilities and proceeded to do it anyway. No other government in Canada, Mr. Speaker, has dealt with the opposition in the sort of reckless abandon that this government has. I venture to say there's not another government in Canada of which it can be said, not a single solitary suggestion from the opposition during all their years in office has ever been accepted.

The hon. member asks, why does it work everywhere else? It works everywhere else because those in office have some minimum sense of integrity, some minimum sense of fair play, Mr. Speaker, some minimum sense of honour. The member from Quill Lakes is right — no other government is as amoral as this government. So this province is different, and different rules must apply.

Mr. Speaker, when I went home at 5 o'clock I received quite a number of telephone calls from people who were interested in the proceedings — wondering what was going on — by and large called to lend their moral support to what we were doing.

One of them asked if bell-ringing is necessary, as you say, because of this government's lack of integrity and lack of honour. What should they be doing differently? I don't suppose, Mr. Speaker, I really did the question justice. But there is a number of things that will have to be done differently before this government can expect to receive the sort of trust from the opposition and from the public which most governments are accorded.

One of the things is illustrated by the fashion in which this is presented. This is a unilateral move to change the rules, done apparently by the member from Kindersley. It appears, Mr. Speaker, that he sought the co-operation of the opposition; got it. At the 11th hour, whether he was unable to handle his caucus or whether the member was bitter or any one of the scenarios might have been . . . He might not have been honest with the caucus initially; he might not have been able to persuade them; he might not have talked to them at all. For whatever reason — the reasons appear largely petty — at the 11th hour, just as we were to consummate the deal, send the whole problem off to a rules committee, the member from Kindersley announced that they were proceeding unilaterally.

I was interested, Mr. Speaker, in the recitation by the . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — You can't trust that Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Yes, but that's right. It's another example of people you cannot deal with in good faith.

There was obviously some element of risk for both sides. We accepted that element of risk. We said, we are prepared to take the risk to make the House work. We're prepared to send this problem off to the rules committee, and then we can get on with dealing with some of the problems which need to be dealt with. I'll get back to that subject, Mr. Speaker, a little later.

However the member from Kindersley chose arbitrarily, abruptly, without any explanation, at the 11th hour to can the deal and proceed unilaterally. I will never understand why, nor is the member from Kindersley apparently ever going to provide anything in the nature of an explanation. The negotiations may never have been in good faith. It's quite possible the member from Kindersley never intended to see this matter settled in a proper fashion.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's fair to say members opposite are hurting. They've had a catastrophic spring — some bad luck, but a very, very generous measure of bad management mixed in with it. I think perhaps the best explanation for the member from Kindersley's behaviour is that he was angry, frustrated, and he was petty, and I think that's not an unfair comment.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg said in his remarks . . . he read a fairly long recitation of some comments made by the member from Riversdale, the Leader of the Opposition. It is not clear what, precisely, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg thought he was doing by reading those comments. Those comments, it does appear that he misunderstood them.

Whatever sense one can make of the member from "really glad and really proud" — whatever sense one can make of his comments, one would have to assume that he felt that the Leader of the Opposition, when the Leader of the Opposition said, that's an interesting offer and we'll consider it over a day or two, one has to assume that the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg felt that the Leader of the Opposition was responding to the member from Kindersley's motion that the bell-ringing be terminated. That's the only sense I can make of those comments . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Is that what he would say? Well, now indeed, indeed . . . We cannot lose the member from Wascana. If we lose him the world will descend into darkness again, and it was so useful to have his views enlightening the world.

The member from Wascana says he thought the member from Riversdale was a man of his word. The member from Riversdale, in those comments, because I was here and I heard him, was not responding to the member from Kindersley's motion to stop the bell-ringing. He was responding to something different. He was responding, as I know some members opposite realize, he was responding to the member from Kindersley's offer, made on that Friday afternoon, to send the whole thing to a rules committee. That's what those comments were made in response to. He said, that's a useful offer, and I'll consider it over a day or two.

Well I note that the member from Thunder Creek is looking it up. When he looks it up, I hope he will continue to shout from his seat and give me the page number, because I don't have the page number, but I am virtually

certain that's what the comments were made in response to.

You see, I've irritated the member from Maple Creek, my heavens. It's a tragedy, Mr. Speaker. A person of such good will, I don't know how it could happen. She'll . . . Like the member from Wascana, she's . . . Perhaps I had better not be too descriptive, Mr. Speaker. If I were too accurate I might be unparliamentary. I have to strike a balance here between accuracy and being parliamentary, so I will not attempt at any more detail to describe the behaviour of the member from Maple Creek.

The member from Riversdale responded in a positive fashion on that Friday. He said, it's a good, interesting offer; we'll think about it and get back to you . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right. That's right. Over the weekend we'll think about it and get back to you, and he said he was thinking about the offer to send it to the rules committee. This is what has escaped you people about those comments.

**An Hon. Member:** — You guys don't understand anything that's not knee-jerk.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Well, they don't understand it. They also never listen. Their work here would be immeasurably easier and immeasurably more effective if they'd listen to at least a part of what was said.

**An Hon. Member:** — How many times do you think the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg . . . (inaudible) . . . and how many times it makes him listen?

**Mr. Shillington:** — Well, I think it was about . . . the ratio is one of infinity, because he mentioned speaking often, and never mentioned listening. It goes to illustrate again the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, who really misrepresented what the member from Riversdale said, it just goes to illustrate again to the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg that listening is much more important than speaking.

(1915)

I always believe, Mr. Speaker, that politicians get re-elected, not for their ability to speak but for their ability to listen. I have known members who have lasted a fair while. All of them were good listeners. Only some of them were good speakers. I think of Auburn Pepper, former member from Weyburn, a good speaker, but he didn't get elected for that. He got elected for his ability to listen.

I would say to the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg that if he wants to get re-elected, he should learn to listen . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. I think the hon. member's getting off into an area that really isn't related to the topic under discussion at all. The electoral chances of the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg are really not related to this incident directly, as the member's putting it, and therefore I just bring that to his attention.

**Mr. Shillington:** — I entirely agree. It probably isn't

relevant. It certainly isn't very compassionate to talk about the electoral chances of the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg.

He did, however, quite clearly quote the comments of the member from Riversdale. The member from Riversdale, the Leader of the Opposition, said with clarity, when the Minister of Justice said, we'll send it . . . The Minister of Justice from his seat and not in any official capacity, and I guess he had said it privately across the . . . behind the bar, he had said, we will send this whole problem to a committee.

**An Hon. Member:** — That's a good idea, good idea.

**Mr. Shillington:** — And that's exactly what the member from Riversdale said: that's a good idea, we'll consider it. Well over the next couple of days — that was on a Friday — we did consider it over a couple of days. We responded positively. We felt there were other things that might also be considered, but we . . . And we had a deal; it was ready to go. At the eleventh hour, not more than an hour from the opening of the sitting in which the motion was to be moved to send it to a committee, the Minister of Justice began to back-pedal furiously.

**An Hon. Member:** — But it's not too late for them to admit they're wrong.

**Mr. Shillington:** — It is indeed not too late for them to admit they're wrong. I was, Mr. Speaker, mentioning it over the supper hour. I received a number of calls, most of them congratulatory but some rather thought-provoking. One in particular asked me what ought to be done that's different. One of the things that ought to be done that is different is that members opposite should stop proceeding unilaterally. You should begin to work with the opposition.

This place, Mr. Speaker, has always operated on a basis of trust and understanding. It has never been an institution in which the government can do whatever it likes, behave as it sees fit. There has always had to be a degree of accommodation between the government and the opposition. No effort whatsoever, Mr. Speaker, was made this year, in this session, to achieve any kind of rapport with the opposition.

I want to, if I could find it quickly . . . I refer to an article — I'll only refer to it briefly — by Ron Petrie, who wrote on May 13 edition of the *Leader-Post*:

In this (session), the third session of the 21st Saskatchewan legislature, fair play is for wienies.

He went on to say that the government had started the problems when the session was only days old, and I read again:

The new session was only days old when the Conservatives dumped on the NDP a washtub-sized load of long-overdue documents containing details about past government activities and spending. Some of the information had been ordered by the NDP as long ago as the autumn of 1987.

He goes on, Mr. Speaker, to describe the fashion in which the government has proceeded with this session. They really need, Mr. Speaker . . . and I'm amazed that some of the members — I guess there's just one left — has spent as long in this Assembly as I have.

The member from Souris-Cannington, who is, not coincidentally, the Government House Leader, has been here 13 years. I am amazed that in that 13 years he's learned as little as he has about how this institution operates. The member from Souris-Cannington and the Government House Leader proceeds as if the opposition doesn't matter, doesn't have to work for them, doesn't have to consider them, can do whatever he pleases.

If I were to describe some of the nicknames, Mr. Speaker, that might be considered provocative, and I'm making a studious effort not to appear provocative, but the member from Souris-Cannington has developed the reputation of driving a big truck and letting others get off the road. Well it doesn't work.

At some time, it's to be hoped, the member from Souris-Cannington will come to some understanding of how this place actually operates. It operates on the basis of consensus. We must work together. We have a mutual interest in doing that, Mr. Speaker. We have a mutual interest in getting to those issues — as we have not — which the public of Saskatchewan want and expect us to deal with.

To put it mildly, Mr. Speaker, this motion which we've dealt with now for the last 10 days, I would guess — I've forgotten exactly how many — is not on anybody's list of priorities except members opposite.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, all the members of this side of the House have spent a goodly amount of time out in the public. Members opposite, I suspect, don't feel very comfortable out in public. I suspect that members opposite hear a good deal more than they want to about these activities. Members on this side have spent a good deal of time in the public; certainly I have. I haven't had anyone, not anyone, say, gee I'm sure glad you people are dealing with the bell-ringing. Nobody thinks this has to be dealt with. I don't know of anybody, Mr. Speaker, who feels that the bell-ringing and the abolition of the bell-ringing is germane to the province's business.

This motion, Mr. Speaker, should be abandoned. It should be set aside and we should deal with some of the other issues which are not trifling in nature. Mr. Speaker, we have a . . . okay, I . . . some assistance now, we have a good research department. This is what Mr. Andrew's . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm glad to see the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg is back. I was saying at an earlier . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, order. The hon. member knows he's breaking the rule about mentioning member's absence or presence, and I would ask him to adhere to it.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Yes, of course you're right. Of course

you're right. I want the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, who read Mr. Romanow's comments into the record as if they were a partial agreement . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well it's very, very germane to the subject. The member opposite, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, stated that Mr. Romanow was a man of honour . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Of course the hon. member knows that we don't refer to other members' names except in certain circumstances, and I'd like to bring that to his attention.

**Mr. Shillington:** — I did, of course, transgress that in an unguarded moment. But the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg stated — and I want to clear up the record — the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg stated that the Leader of the Opposition had indicated that he would likely agree to the proposed rule change by the Minister of Justice. And he went on in a long recitation to suggest that the Leader of the Opposition intended to do this but then broke his word.

Let me read for the member from . . . I said earlier that what the Minister of Justice had proposed was not the changing of the rule, but a rules committee, and that, of course, is what we seek. Let me read for the benefit of members opposite. There seems to be some confusion because I note the member from Thunder Creek has quit looking through; I assume he's found the passage and has found that in fact my interpretation is accurate.

The Minister of Justice said as follows . . . It is May 11 of 1989. It is page 10,083. I'm going to, just by way of background, I'm going to read a couple of . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Page 1,083.

**Mr. Shillington:** — 1,083. I'm going to read a couple of . . . I'm going to read the Minister of Justice's comments. By way of background, I'm going to read a couple of the preceding paragraphs, because what the Minister of Justice said is what we are saying.

Let me read for you what the Minister of Justice said about the process:

Mr. Speaker, this Assembly runs not only by the rules but by the gentlemanly understanding that members have for each other. And institutions like parliament, including this institution, has done it that way — the unwritten rules, if you like.

The member from Kindersley goes on:

Given that environment, Mr. Speaker, to suggest that we wait for rule changes until all parties have agreed is tantamount to delegating to the opposition the veto power of dealing with rules. It's tantamounting to accept instructionism . . . (Well there's a new contribution to the English language.) It's tantamounting to accept instructionism for the duration of this.

Then he goes on, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I still am concerned about this concept of the rule changes being introduced in this way. And before I take my place, I make this point to the hon. members. If the opposition will stand in their place and say that the major concern they have is the process; the concern that they have with this issue is the process, then I ask them to do that.

And he goes on, the member for Kindersley continues, the Minister of Justice and the mover of the proponent of the motion, although not the technical mover. The Minister of Justice says:

And if process is what is wrong with this action today, then I invite the hon. member to ask to adjourn the debate, to put together two members or three members from the opposition and two or three members from the government to go and see if we can't collectively come to a resolve to find what would be a fair rule as it relates to bell-ringing.

An explicit, crystal clear offer of a rules committee.

(1930)

The Minister of Justice then said, and I'm going to read this:

I'm not suggesting that today (this is the member from Riversdale, the Leader of the Opposition). I'm not suggesting that today. What I am suggesting today is that we should take the suggestion of the Minister of Justice and we should move on to the next phase of seeing how it is (that) we can strengthen not only this institution, but democracy. And I think we'd be all well-advised — and I will include myself in this — all (be) well-advised if we attempted to play by, as much as we can, the concepts of democracy; namely, questions which are answered, and tabling of reports on time, and (of) legislative sessions, a legislative session which is vigorous and is reported (widely) so that the people can get its work done through the government elected. But we should respect always, always, that the people, at the end of the day, are right, through mandates. That's what we should respect.

I think therefore (that) the suggestion of the Minister of Justice bears further, (very) serious consideration. And I'll undertake to him, as Leader of the Opposition, that we will get back to him within the next . . . I would hope the government would at least give us over the weekend — tomorrow is Friday . . . to caucus and to consider what he (had) said — I missed part of his remarks; (I wish to) read the written transcript; and (to) get back to him by, say, Monday at the latest as to what we would suggest in response to his suggestion which, if I may so say so and I don't mean to be argumentative here, I would have liked the government to have done before it introduced the motion unilaterally. But that's water under the bridge. Let's not look at the past;

let's look at the future.

I think we'll take up that suggestion and take an example of it for the next two or three days and consider it carefully, and get back to the government proponent of the mover, the Minister of Justice.

With those few remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

That was a direct quote from the Minister of Justice. That, Mr. Speaker, contrary to the interpretation put on that by the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, that is precisely how this matter should have proceeded. The Minister of Justice extended an olive branch; the Leader of the Opposition accepted the olive branch.

We might, Mr. Speaker, have been doing estimates now. We might have been considering the estimates of the Department of Education or the department of privatization — privatization, as I think it's more aptly called. We might have been considering the estimates of the Minister of Environment, and should be. We have some questions that we'd like to ask the Minister of the Environment.

**An Hon. Member:** — Well let's get on with it.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Well the member from Wilkie says, as usual only half listening, the member from Wilkie says, well let's get on with it. My point precisely — let's get on with it. It is not us, Mr. Speaker, who every day calls this silly, unnecessary motion — this motion that nobody but members opposite feel is necessary.

We'd like to . . . Mr. Speaker, we think this Assembly should be dealing with education and schools. We get complaints from school boards, Mr. Speaker, that they're having to borrow money. This government is using this motion as a pretext for denying them their money, and it is just a pretext. This motion is nothing more.

The Minister of Education and this comment of his with respect to the current motion bears some response. The Minister of Education stated that he hadn't been able to get the schools their money because this motion was a stall. That, Mr. Speaker, was simply not accurate. I could describe the member from Weyburn, the Minister of Education's comments much more completely than that except it wouldn't be parliamentary.

The Minister of Justice, Mr. Speaker . . . the Minister of Education stated the school boards haven't got their money because of this. The Minister of Justice knows full well that we pass interim supply. The estimates have not for some time been the key which unlocks the funds. It hasn't worked that way for many, many years. The estimates do not unlock the cash drawer; the estimates do not make the money available to the school board. The estimates, indeed, are an opportunity by which we exercise the first of the functions I mentioned earlier — by which we exercise our right to hold the government to account.

The cash drawer is unlocked through appropriation Bills,

interim supply. The Minister of Education knows that full well. So when the Minister of Education said that this has to be passed because the school boards haven't got their money, I have difficulty believing that the Minister of Education knows as little as about this legislature as that. It has not ever during his time, nor during mine for that matter, ever been a case that the estimates give the key to the cash drawer; that's not the purpose the estimates serves. The Appropriation Bill does that, and there are several appropriation Bills. There's generally one a month while this House is in session.

And I suppose before the Minister of Education again starts to complain that this current motion which we're debating is holding up the funds of the school board, I would invite the government members to bring forth another Appropriation Bill, an interim supply as it's called. Bring forth another interim supply . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . This time the member from the . . . the minister of privatization says, we will, we will. It's to be hoped . . .

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

**Mr. Gerich:** — Could I get leave from the Assembly to introduce some guests?

Leave granted.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Gerich:** — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, to you, and through you and to the members of the legislature, I would like to introduce 16 students from Saulteaux School. They're grades 5 and 6; they're accompanied by their teacher, Diane Lappan, and chaperon, Audrey Night. I will be visiting with them after in the members' dining lounge downstairs. I would like to ask the members to please welcome my guests to Regina.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### MOTIONS

#### *Amendments to Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly (continued)*

**Mr. Shillington:** — The member from Athabasca correctly points out that, so familiar with his riding that he doesn't know how to pronounce the name. It's Saulteaux not . . . Apart from the fact that the member does not know how to pronounce the name of that community, I'm sure his welcome was sincere and intended.

I want to join in welcoming the members and the students to this institution. We are considering a change in the way this place works, and it's a debate which will have far-reaching consequences. Some day one of you students will no doubt — perhaps one or more of you will no doubt be sitting down here. What we are discussing today may well affect the way that you operate this institution when you get elected.

Mr. Speaker, before, indeed I was dealing with the

minister of privatization. I was talking about the minister of privatization. I was suggesting that we need to get off . . . we need to adjourn this Bill and not call it and deal with something else. The government's obstinacy in continuing to call this Bill has meant that other problems which need attention have not been dealt with. I just picked the ministers who are here. It could be any one of them.

We have some questions we'd like to ask the Minister of the Environment about the process in which this government got themselves into the \$250 million mess at Rafferty. We think there's evidence that the Department of the Environment did not do its job.

**The Speaker:** — I'm afraid the hon. member is wandering off the topic. We're discussing the process of a change to rule 33(1). And it really isn't a forum for a debate on a wide-ranging list of grievances even though, perhaps, the member from Indian Head-Wolseley did make a comment from his seat, but I don't think that's a pretext for a wide-ranging discussion of some grievance that somebody raised.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't get into a wide-ranging discussion of the Rafferty dam. Suffice it to say that this Bill should be stood. This motion, rather, should not be called again; we should be dealing with some of these other things. We should . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I would do that except that I've already adjourned it once, so I cannot adjourn it a second time. I think those are the rules.

So I say to members opposite, when I take my seat I invite the Government House Leader to deal with something which is of importance to the public — agriculture, environment, privatization — to call those problems. Let us deal with the estimates of the Department of Agriculture where there are some serious problems in the agricultural industry, the rain notwithstanding. Those need to be dealt with, Mr. Speaker.

Nobody except the front bench opposite, I think, believes that the bell-ringing needs to be dealt with. They've got stubborn, completely lack any public support, and don't want to admit it by standing the motion tomorrow. But the person who called me, asked me what needed to be done differently, what the government needed to do differently. One of the things you need to do is to not call this Bill and get on to something else.

There's nothing to prevent . . . I see the members opposite sitting looking at me crossly as if I were being mischievous. I am being quite sincere. There's nothing to prevent you from passing this Bill when you get some of the other work done. There's nothing to prevent members from dealing with this Bill in July or August, or any other day.

I assume that we aren't going to see the SPC (Saskatchewan Power Corporation) privatization back again until after the charade that passes for the Barber Commission is past, is done with. So at least until then, and I say to members opposite I don't . . . cannot imagine — cannot imagine, I say — I cannot imagine us ringing the bells on any other subject. Other subjects will be

discussed at length, and members had better come prepared to stay awhile, but nothing as outrageous as . . . it would take something as outrageous as SPC, I think, to pry another bell-ringing incident out of us. So there's no reason why this has to be dealt with.

If the government wants a different atmosphere, then I say to members opposite, let's deal with something else. It's hard to believe it, but there actually are things I think members might agree with. I did not take violent exception to the Minister of Finance and his comments about the events in Beijing. Like him, I deplored those events.

Let us go to some of those things that we might agree upon and deal with those issues. Let us at least deal with issues which are of substantive importance to the Saskatchewan public, and let's get off this thing which has proved to be not just divisive but corrosive as well. It's high time, Mr. Speaker, this government got over its pique. It's high time they started to behave like adults. It's high time, Mr. Speaker, that this item was stood and we got on to other business. There's a good deal of it that needs to be done.

(1945)

Mr. Speaker, the bell-ringing incident which took place in the latter part of March . . . in the latter part of April and early part of May, I've said earlier that it was inspired not by the members but by the public. We were really reacting to the public's outrage. We were conduits through which the public made their anger felt. I say, Mr. Speaker, I don't think I'm giving away any secrets when I say that we didn't ring the bells with any long-range plan in mind. We intended to ring them for five minutes. We got some supportive calls which said, don't let them away with it; keep fighting. That five minutes became an hour that Friday morning, an hour became two and a half, and then it became 17 days . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Wilkie who is such a sparkling . . . making such a sparkling contribution here — the member from Wolseley says that the radicals took over. Actually, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't the radicals who took over; it was the public who took over.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — If the member from Wilkie spent some time in his riding, he might well realize the truth of that.

**An Hon. Member:** — I was there all weekend.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Well I've learned something new, because if the member from Wilkie went to his riding for the weekend, I didn't know there were any caves in Wilkie. But if he went to Wilkie for the weekend, you must have spent it in a cave.

Mr. Speaker — not to be provocative though — I must say I bordered on it with that last comment.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying before the member from Wilkie began to assist me with putting together this speech . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Am I going to be up all night? Well I don't know; it depends. The member from Rosthern wants to know if I'm going to be on my feet

all night. It depends on whether or not you people begin to take a more sensible approach.

We think that, subjected to enough rational argument, you'll see the light and mend your ways. And we intend to continue this for a good while further to see if, indeed, there isn't some hope that you people will adopt a more sensible approach to governing this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — So am I going to be on my feet all night? the member from Rosthern asks. That depends very much on you. That depends very much on members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying when . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Rosthern now assists me in putting this speech together. As I was saying, the public took over. The member from Wilkie said the radicals took over. The radicals didn't; the public took over.

I must admit I left at 1 o'clock on Friday with . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, indeed I do like the sound of that, and I wished you people liked the sound of that. I wished you people liked the sound of the comment, "and the people took over."

This government's agenda, Mr. Speaker, is so far removed from what the public really want. This government's agenda badly needs to be taken over by the people.

Given your intransigence, your arrogance, the fact that you are so badly out of touch, it doesn't seem likely that the public ever is going to have any impact on your agenda, much less take it over, but that's really what this government needs. This government needs to have some impact made on its agenda by the public.

I see I'm having scant effect on the member from Wilkie. I don't seem to have persuaded him yet. I'm sure, however, given enough time, we can convert the member from Wilkie. He is not beyond the pale. I don't believe that for a moment, Mr. Speaker.

I must say that, Mr. Speaker, when we adjourned on Friday, when we left Friday with the bells ringing, I left with some trepidation. One doesn't lightly do such a thing. We had only done it once before in the history of this legislature, and the circumstances under which that arose were very different . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Wilkie is insistent he's going to save the opposition caucus from the radicals. If only the member from Wilkie had some understanding of how a real caucus works.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — Some day if the member from Wilkie goes back to his riding, if he ever darkens . . . if his shadow ever falls across the boundary of that riding, there's a chance that he might get re-elected, but I think scant chance . . . the scant chance that he might get elected to a government caucus. You may sit in a different caucus, and you may understand how a caucus operates when . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, order, order. Order. I think that the hon. member is . . . I don't think that, but I know he is once again wandering off the topic, and I ask him to come back to it.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Fair enough. The member from Wilkie was . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Distracting him.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Yes, was distracting me. That's right. I will try and ignore the member from Wilkie who's been . . .

But I say to the member from Wilkie: some day you may understand how a caucus should operate; obviously yours isn't operating in that fashion. If your caucus operated as a government caucus should, you'd never be in this pickle. If your caucus operated as it should, the members of the treasury bench would be listening to people in the back bench, and they would know that this is unpopular. They would know that the public don't want this. This would never have happened, Mr. Speaker, if caucus was operating as it should.

Nevertheless we left on Friday . . . I left with some trepidation. I was astounded at the public reaction to the events of Friday. Having spent 14 years in the same riding, one gets to know the people. I know a goodly number of those whom are my supporters. I know, respect, and have a good relationship with a number who aren't.

All of them, of every political complexion, felt that the government's behaviour was outrageous. All of them commented on it. It wasn't possible to go into Safeway for a loaf or for a quart of milk without having a dozen people stop you, comment upon the government's behaviour, and inevitably . . . Well the Speaker's going to sit me down again if I continue to administer advice to the member from Wilkie.

It wasn't possible to go out in public without people stopping you, without people saying to you, keep up the good work.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — I went shopping with my family. They eventually just abandoned me and went on, because it simply wasn't possible to buy the groceries. People wanted to talk about this, and they all commented adversely on what the government was doing. They all commented adversely.

We then decided to collect names on a petition, and that was indeed a rewarding experience. As I said, Mr. Speaker, it was the bell-ringing which allowed the voice of the public to be brought to bear on this government's activities. If we had not rung the bell, this would have been what it so often is, a debating society. We would have made our comments. Our government would have not listened and would have gone on their merrily way, and their merrily way so far has been a path of destruction.

The bell-ringing, in some ways, restored this institution's reputation as a safeguard of the rights of the public. In many ways I think that's true. In many ways I think the public had come to regard the House of Commons in Ottawa and these legislatures as somewhat irrelevant to the whole process. The government did what they wanted. The members debated. But what the members here did, did not seem to have any real effect on the affairs of government. And I think many people had seen the House of Commons in Ottawa and this legislature as progressively less relevant. Its relevance was simply as a training ground for a new government when the public got tired of the existing one, something that . . . a purpose it is going to be serving fairly shortly, I might add.

This bell-ringing, Mr. Speaker, in a fashion which I haven't seen, allowed the views of the public to be brought to bear on what the government was doing. It turned the legislature into a body which exercised some real control and restraint over government.

I sat in front of the Cornwall Centre — it's in the centre of my riding — during this 17-day period with a petition. Others were happy to do it for me, but I wanted to do it myself. I wanted to meet them and listen to them, both the yeas and the nays. Mr. Speaker, there were very few nays.

On Saturday, there were a number of people who joined me; I was at the Cornwall Centre; it was this last Saturday we were out. It was a very cold, March day, and I took the door which was the coldest, in a sense, the north-east door.

I did not realize it, but across the street was a young Conservative rally. A number of young Conservatives, about 10 in the morning, came across to hassle me, in fact. They soon found themselves so badly hassled, and the crowd surrounded them. They had no friends. I finally left the corner; it was impossible to do any sensible business on the corner because everybody was intent on beating up on these kids.

When I left, two people who were getting a master's in commerce . . . Now these are not . . . people who will get a master's in business administration . . . When I left after 20 minutes, the two business administration students were having at the young Tories. The young Tories could not get . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — What's this got to do with it?

**Mr. Shillington:** — Well the member from Lloydminster doesn't want to hear this. If the member from Lloydminster were listening continuously, you'd know that what I am saying is that the public wanted us out; they wanted to do something to put the brakes on this government. They wanted to do something to stop the government and to stop the privatization of SPC.

The member from Lloydminster says this was nothing but your NDP radicals. I don't know whether it alarms the member from Lloydminster to think that some four-fifths of the people of Saskatchewan agreed with those NDP radicals. I don't know whether that makes any impression on you. But the public did — nearly four-fifths, nearly . . .

there was just 22 per cent, 22 per cent of the public supported your position. That's almost eight out of ten . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Lloydminster making again a marvellous contribution, marvellous contribution, one of his typical.

The member for Lloydminster states that this was the radicals taking over. Well I think, Mr. Member, you may give some pause to think that only one out of four people felt so . . . one out of five. The other four out of five either had no opinion — the vast majority, they were with us. So, Mr. Member, if this is the NDP radicals taking over, you must be a little alarmed to think that you're describing 80 per cent of the Saskatchewan public. That's about the number which agree with us.

(2000)

One would have thought . . . And Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that the public were tougher on the young Conservatives than they were on the members. I think when the members opposite walked down the streets of their ridings, I think they got exactly the same reaction as those young Tories did. I think they were treated in exactly the same fashion during those 17 days. I don't think for a moment — to the extent I guess that they were in their riding during those 17 days, I don't think for a moment they hassled young Tories and left members alone; that's not the way the public react in this province. I think members opposite got exactly the same reaction.

So what did we do during the 17 days? We accomplished a good deal. We restored . . . I'm going to deal in a moment with the cost of it.

The member from Kinistino, who has a fair head for business and figures, I believe, knows better than that. I believe he doesn't believe that \$30,000 figure, because I know the member from Kinistino, not well, but I know that you have a head for both business and figures. I believe you can do a little better than that, sir, and I will get to that in a moment.

What did we accomplish? We restored the . . . I think, Mr. Speaker, to some extent we restored the confidence of the public in this institution. I think they felt that this institution was relevant, was serving a useful purpose, and I think they felt good about this institution.

**An Hon. Member:** — We gave the people of the province some hope that somebody cared about what these guys are doing.

**Mr. Shillington:** — That's right. That's right. One of the members adds that we gave the public some hope that somebody cared about them. I think that's right. I think the public felt that a government was going blindly down a road to destruction, that they weren't listening to the public, and that nobody could do anything to stop them.

That 17-day period, Mr. Speaker, proved that something could be done to stop them, something in a sense was done to stop them. Before we had . . . Unfortunately not quite enough was done to stop them. One would have thought that, given the scolding which they must have got when they went to their ridings, and I assume they did at

least on the weekend, one must have thought that they would have said to themselves: gee, I wonder if it's wise to be flying in the face of public opinion in the fashion in which we are.

One would have thought there would've been some doubts in members opposite. One would have thought there would've been some . . . There's always some hotheads in any group of people, but one would have expected there to be some cool heads, some people who say: we can't do this; we cannot behave in such a fashion and expect the public to elect us.

**The Speaker:** — Order. I'm afraid I must once more draw the member's attention to the fact that we aren't in the process of debating another Bill, or implications to another Bill, or actions of the opposition's relating to it. We're debating rule 33(1) and the amendments to it and the process involved in that and the implications in that. We're not really debating government policy *per se* on a wide scale.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Now if I left that impression, then that was in error. I wasn't intending to debate the full range of government business.

I was just commenting on the fact that I would have expected members opposite to arrive at the same conclusion we did about the bell-ringing, and that is that the public judged the bell-ringing by the issue. They did not like privatization, and therefore they were prepared to accept bell-ringing in those circumstances.

I would have thought that members opposite would have come back a somewhat chastened lot, would have thought they would have realized, hey, maybe there are some things after all that are sacrosanct; maybe there are some things which shouldn't be privatized, and perhaps there are some things which shouldn't be done.

**An Hon. Member:** — And that Saskatchewan is different than Great Britain.

**Mr. Shillington:** — And that Saskatchewan is different than Great Britain. It's also different than . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — The Britton over there.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Both great Britains are quite different, I may say.

But members didn't. Members appeared to have learned very, very little from that period. They must have . . . Public opinion polls suggested there was very, very little, very, very little support for them.

Yes, I think it's worthwhile drawing to members' attention what the polls did show. The polls, Mr. Deputy Speaker, found that 22 per cent supported the idea of privatizing SPC — a relatively small number . . . a relatively large number, actually.

It goes on to provide one other rather interesting fact. Even among people who said they would vote Conservative, 30 per cent of people who said they would vote Conservative are opposed to the plan. And don't

forget at this point in time there was only a small percentage of the Saskatchewan people saying, I'll vote Conservative. By this point in time they were down to their rock-ribbed Conservative support. Even in that rock-ribbed Conservative support, only 30 per cent said they would . . . 30 per cent said they would vote against the plan to privatize SPC.

The response of the government is interesting — no suggestion that there was anything to be learned from the bell-ringing. The real lesson from the bell-ringing to members opposite should have been, there is massive public opposition to the privatization of SPC. That, for the benefit of members opposite, should have been the lesson. It should have been what you learned. And if you had drawn that conclusion from the bell-ringing, all would not have been lost.

This government has in the past, has not always been this obstinate, Mr. Speaker. The government in the past has learned from its mistakes. I remember the North East by-election in Regina North East, when a seat held by the government, the NDP won by 70 some per cent of the vote. What was the Premier's response? Maybe there's been some mistakes and maybe we need to change something. And, whether we like it or not, he went on to win the 1986 election.

That might have been what the Premier . . . the conclusion that the Premier drew from the bell-ringing. The lesson was surely not that the NDP had hijacked the legislature. The lesson in all of this, surely, was to be drawn from the fact it was truly remarkable that a party could walk out of the legislature for 17 days and enjoy overwhelming public support in so doing. That is what is truly remarkable about it.

I would never, ever have believed it were possible to do so. If someone had said . . . the Leader of the Opposition doesn't operate in this fashion; he operates by consensus. And that, I think, is one of the reasons why this caucus has been as effective as it has. But if, on that Friday morning when we left, the Leader of the Opposition had said, now I've thought about this matter and we're going to be gone for 17 days because that's one way to dramatize the public issue, I'd have thought he'd gone absolutely stark, raving mad. I would have thought the public opinion would have been massively against such a move, but it didn't.

This poll, taken in the second week, showed overwhelming support, and fully 67 per cent of those questioned opposed it, 22 per cent were in favour of it, and 11 per cent didn't know.

Another remarkable feature is the very small number of people who had no opinion. That is truly unusual to have an item of this nature, which blows up very suddenly, and to have such a small number of people in the "don't know" column. I suspect that when you get down to 11 per cent, the people who say they don't know are the people who are: (a) too busy to answer the phone; (b) too hard of hearing to understand what's being said to them; or (c) truly uninterested. But there were very few in the latter, truly uninterested. I suspect that most of the "don't knows" were in too much of a hurry to respond to what

takes 15 or 20 minutes, or were hard of hearing or something.

So I say to members opposite, surely the lesson to be drawn from the bell-ringing is the remarkable fact that we've gone for 17 days — enjoyed more support when we come back than we did when we left. That's a fact.

We left with very large public support, which I didn't trust, I may say. Unlike members opposite, we don't have tax dollars with which to do our polling. Members opposite do their polling with tax dollars. It's obviously very sophisticated; ours is not. It has proved to be reliable, but it isn't very sophisticated.

But when we left we did some polling; they gave us figures which were a little lower than this but still showed a fair degree . . . an overwhelming degree of public support. What is remarkable — if all the polls are accurate, what is remarkable is that . . . Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I dropped a paper. What is remarkable is that we came back with more support than we had when we left.

I would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite would have drawn a lesson from that. I would have thought, at a very minimum, members opposite would have concluded that the public don't want SPC privatized. I would have thought that members opposite would have urged the Premier — Guy Montpetit states that it's Mr. Berntson who is the real head of government. Perhaps then they should — I apologize for that. I should not have called him by his first name. It was the Deputy Premier who is really Premier.

I would have thought members opposite would be urging the front bench to abandon SPC. If they did, this problem might resolve itself. You see, what the public are saying is, don't let them do it; whatever it costs, don't let them privatize SPC. This is the one sure weapon we have to prevent the privatization of SPC. That is the only one.

I have been impressed, Mr. Speaker, with the resources in this caucus and their ability to deliver good speeches, which thoroughly canvass a subject, and the emphasis is on the thoroughness of it. The member from Rosemont went on for, spoke for, I think it was eight hours in total — a good speech. I've had any number of people over the weekend who said it was a very good speech, very interesting.

(2015)

Got a neighbour who's . . . I've got a number of neighbours, some of them have not pretended to be New Democrat. Some of them mentioned, quite a number of them mentioned it to me over the weekend, got a goodly number of compliments on the speech of the member from Rosemont, and universally they want there to be no doubt but what the privatization of SPC is stopped. That they want to be sure.

This bell-ringing is the only sure weapon we have. There is nothing to prevent the government, and I had a Dave Traynor, a reporter from *Star-Phoenix* put the following question to me, and not in a rhetorical fashion. It may sound like that when I repeat the question, but it was not

rhetorical. He said to me: do you believe that the Conservatives want to get this through so that they can use closure on SPC? I said, well, you have to admit that that is a very real danger. There is a form of closure in this legislature; it's never been used.

**An Hon. Member:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — What is the hon. member's point of order?

**Mr. Hopfner:** — Mr. Speaker, the member has been, that's speaking here, has been talking basically about a closure on SPC and a closure on any . . . it's just hypothetical, and I'd like you to basically overrule him on his basis and on his points that he's risen here, brought forth today.

And also, Mr. Speaker, in with the point of order, a lot of what he's been saying here has been irrelevant and has been very repetitious. And the filibustering tactics are basically preventing people from the government side to stand and speak on behalf of this Bill. And he had already indicated about 45 minutes ago that he was going to sit down. And he hasn't yet.

**Mr. Anguish:** — Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order. Mr. Speaker, the member knows very well that's not a point of order. It's not in his judgement as to whether or not the speech is on the topic; that's entirely your judgement. And when the member did stray somewhat earlier this evening, you, in fact, drew to his attention that he was off the topic, and we honoured your ruling at that point in time.

The member opposite, the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster cannot even quote the citation from *Beauchesne's*. Whenever he seems to disagree with what a member is saying, he springs to his feet in great enthusiasm to draw to your attention an issue that he doesn't even know of which he speaks. If he could quote Erskine May's or the rules of the legislature, or if he could quote from *Beauchesne's* Fifth Edition, there may be some validity.

We are tiring very quickly of his interruptions. The member had a good flow going here this evening, and we'd like you to consider that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — Well I've listened to both sides of the issue. The hon. member's point of order, if I may say, came in two parts. The initial portion where the issue is the alleged hypothetical nature of the hon. member's argument, of course, is dispute between two members, and it is not a point of order.

The issue of relevancy, of course, is a point of order. And we have been talking about this periodically tonight, and certainly I wish to remind the hon. member, as far as relevancy is concerned, that hon. members should be relevant to the topic under discussion.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — I will admit, Mr. Speaker, tonight on occasion I've strayed from the strict bounds of the rule,

particularly in my efforts to assist the member from Wilkie. I did not think, however, when interrupted by the member from Lloydminster, that I had strayed. I thought I was directly on the subject.

Mr. Speaker, we use the 17-day period for more than just sitting. Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, order, order, order, order. Order. Order, order. I'll just recognize the member for Regina Centre.

**Mr. Shillington:** — There is a rumour, really as yet untrue, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Saltcoats can't speak on his feet, but there is no evidence of that matter one way or the other; we don't know. Some day he may prove that right or wrong by actually getting on his feet and trying to speak.

**The Speaker:** — I believe that perhaps the best I could say is that we're having a number of sub-debates taking place. I know some plays have been written with a sub-plot, but I don't know if the legislature is normally a place for sub-debates to be taking place. Would the hon. members stick to rule 33(1).

**Mr. Muirhead:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The member's been repeating and repeating and repeating here for two and a half hours. And is there a point, Mr. Speaker, where if a member keeps on repeating and repeating that you can rule to move on to a new speaker? The member has been talking and talking, Mr. Speaker, about money being spent and money being wasted. We just had 50 days wasted with only one estimate passed, which is a million and a half spent and wasted by the members opposite.

**Mr. Anguish:** — On the same point, Mr. Speaker, being we have a member from the government side of the House, just because he does not like what our member has to say who has the floor, he can't quote a citation from *Beauchesne's* or *Erskine May* or from the rules of the Assembly, stands on his feet and says the member's been repetitive.

We trust and respect your Chair, Mr. Speaker. We know that you'll rule when a member is being repetitive.

And I think it's just absolutely out of order, Mr. Speaker, for a member to be continually interrupting our speaker while he has the floor on a very important item, the motion here in which the government wishes to change the amount of time that bells can ring in the legislature. And I would point out to you, Mr. Speaker, and as you will well know, the member has no point of order.

**The Speaker:** — The issue of tedious repetition, of course, is a part of parliamentary rules, and when the member speaks for a long time, of course, there is a danger of that happening. I would like to just remind the hon. member that in his remarks not to go over the same issue over and over. I think he's been trying to do that. I ask him to continue to try to do that and continue with his remarks on rule 33(1).

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — Before the member from Arm River and the member from Lloydminster decided to make their contribution, I was saying — and I will summarize it and leave it by saying, the members opposite say of the 17-day bell-ringing: you hijacked the legislature; you cost us a lot of money; that's anti-democratic; it's childish; you're on strike. The remarkable thing, the truly remarkable thing is that nobody agrees with you. And that's truly remarkable. I would never have believed that would actually have occurred.

That ought to give members opposite some pause to think, and perhaps members opposite should abandon the SPC privatization and perhaps you should at least set this thing aside for the moment, proceed with something else. I would think that the remarkable chain of events in that 17-day period would have given you some pause for thought.

I tried to pay the Premier a compliment and say that he had reacted in the fashion I suggested after an earlier set-back in the Regina North East by-election in 1985. He said, I guess we made some mistakes, and he got re-elected. He's not doing that this time. He's saying there were no mistakes made. We stand on hallowed ground. We defend our actions as if we were defending the land of our birth and the bones of our fathers. As long as that intransigence continues, members opposite and this government can have some very serious problems. If you're not prepared to learn when you make a mistake, and if you're not prepared to change your ways, you're not going to last much beyond the next election. I would have thought members opposite would have thought of that.

During the 17-day bell-ringing session we did more than . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I invite the member to ask himself why none of the public have ever used that term . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Haven't. Yes, you wished we had phrased the question differently. Members opposite wished we had asked, don't you want your power rates lowered? That's just patent nonsense.

As I said, you can sell a quarter section and subsidize the operating costs for a while, but you can't do it for very long. You may be able to subsidize power rates for a while, but you can't do it for very long. And it is just patent nonsense to suggest that, as the Premier did, the question should have been, do you want lower power rates? That's just nonsense, just absolute nonsense. And if members opposite, after this length of time, still partake of that foolishness, then you want to rid yourselves of it, because you aren't going to be able to come to terms with the problems that you face, and you must be aware of them.

So long as you continue to live in this never, never land; so long as you pretend that the ordinary rules of business — the ordinary rules of mathematics, never mind good business administration, don't apply to you . . . They apply to everybody. The law of gravity applies to us as well as to you. The principles of sound public administration, the principles of sound business administration apply to everybody, you as well. It's high time you began to take note of reality.

Mr. Speaker, we did more than just let the bells ring. It did in a fashion . . . I have not, I don't think, in 14 years ever seen any single event which so galvanized public opinion. He just electrified public opinion in this province. People talked about nothing else from one end of the province to the other.

Perhaps medicare was as dramatic — traumatic, I guess, would be just as good a word. Perhaps medicare was as traumatic. The death of John F. Kennedy was. But in the life of this province, those are the sort of events you have to compare it to, to think of a similar instances which so caught public opinion as that bell-ringing session.

The public, all within a very short period of time, knew what was going on, had a remarkably good grasp of the issue. They had understood that a part of SPC, and only a part of SPC, was going to be privatized. They understood that the government was privatizing the profitable portion, natural gas, and retaining the unprofitable portion. And so they understood it remarkably well.

Mr. Speaker, we didn't just let the bells ring for 17 days, we went further than that. We made every conceivable effort to communicate with the public during that period of time. We took petitions around, and a petition is a two-way communication. It is true that a petition in its formal sense is a communication to the government. But in a much more real sense, a petition allows you to communicate with the public, because you get a chance to talk to them while they're signing it. They get a chance to ask you some questions, and of course, we respond, as we did.

(2030)

So we communicated through the petitions. There are, I think, about a hundred thousand signatures on those petitions. That's a tenth of the population of the province. That means a truly remarkable feat; that means that one out of every 10 people was met by someone who cared a good deal about this issue. It may have been an elected member; it might not have been. But one out of every 10 people was contacted by someone who cared about it, presumably someone who was prepared to answer questions and someone who was prepared to listen to them.

That is really what the public of Saskatchewan wanted: they wanted someone to listen. What the public were saying when they signed the petition is, please listen to us.

**The Speaker:** — I don't like to interrupt the hon. member; however, I have been listening to him carefully, and for some time now he has been talking about the effects of the bell-ringing. He hasn't been talking about the specifics of the changing of the rule on bell-ringing. He's been going on at great length on the effects, and I've allowed him to do that.

He's certainly going over the same territory again, and I would like to ask him to speak more directly to the rule, to the debate, and I'm sure he's able to do that. He's able, he's been in the House for a long time, and I would like him to speak more to the debate itself.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to move to a slightly different portion of my comments. I want to talk about the fashion in which this was brought forward — in some ways its most unfortunate aspect. In some ways that's one of the reasons why we find the motion so objectionable. It is partially its content. We don't think there is any evidence that has been abused, and I will get to that in due course. We don't think there is any evidence that the rule has been abused, but it is partially the process.

We have a very valuable tradition in this Assembly. The tradition is that rules are not changed without a consensus of all parties. That's how it has always been done, and the changes have been very successful.

I've seen a number of such rule changes. It has been done — I am told there's no instance in Saskatchewan's history when rule changes have not been done by consensus. They've all been done with a committee.

Mr. Speaker, the first one I remember was . . . There are, of course, exceptions to that. Not all changes have been brought in on the recommendation of the committee, but they've all been done by consensus.

When I was first elected, the legislature sat on Friday afternoon, sat the same hours Friday as it did, in fact, Wednesday. That was changed, on a simple motion of the House, permanently, but it was done with the consensus of the opposition, who were then Liberals.

But no major changes have taken place without all members being involved, and this is a major change. This is, as I have said, our last effective means of stopping the government. It is patently obvious that all the rational arguments in the world with respect to this government are like water coming off a duck's back — just have no effect at all.

This is our opportunity to bring the government to a halt. We don't do so lightly; in fact, I think any opposition would use such a thing with the greatest of reluctance. But it is there and it is our weapon when need be.

I can recall at least two rules committees, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of which you served on, I believe, if I'm not mistaken. They usually sat intersessionally, usually did some travelling to see how rules that were considered were working elsewhere — always done by consensus. Some of them were things the government wanted, and quite frankly, some of them were things that were not necessarily in the government's best interest.

I recall, Mr. Speaker, the rules committee which, if my memory serves me correctly, you sat on, which recommended the introduction of television into this Assembly. Television obviously is going to broadcast the work of this Assembly over a much, much greater audience. It was not self-evident that it was in the interests of government to broadcast these proceedings. These proceedings are an opportunity for the opposition to hold the government to account. By its nature, the opposition is on the offensive, the government's on the defensive. It's a difficult position to maintain. It was not in any sense self-evident that the introduction of television was in the

interest of the government.

The government of the day could have put a kibosh on it, but it didn't. They went along with the change, and I think it's worked very well. One of the reasons I think it worked well is because all of the members . . . all parties were represented. Everyone participated. The needs of the government were considered, as were the needs of the opposition. And we introduced television in a fashion which worked, I think, to the advantage of all concerned, again because it was done by consensus.

There were other options, one of which was not to have brought in television at all. There were other ways of bringing it in . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Kindersley tells me I missed a good ball game. It may come as some surprise to the member of Kindersley, there are other important issues in the world besides ball, and this is one of them.

Mr. Speaker, before I was so interrupted, I was saying that the system of consensus has served us well in a number of ways, and when I say our system of consensus, our system by which rules are changed only on the agreement of all parties. The rules which have been brought in have worked, I think, to the satisfaction of all concerned. I don't know of any exception to that. Some change which parties might like has not occurred.

It has also served to protect the rights of members. It's a very dangerous precedent to be changing the rules unilaterally, to be saying, I don't like this rule so I'm going to change it. It's a very dangerous precedent to set.

The members opposite should consider whether or not you believe you will always be in government. If you believe that, then this is a great precedent. If you believe that this administration is going to last to the end of time, then this is a very good precedent.

If, however, you believe that what goes around comes around, if you believe that all administrations are defeated sooner or later — a very, very high percentage of them on their second election . . . after their second term, I should have said; only one has ever lasted past three terms, and that was the Douglas government — then you ought to think about unilateral rule changes, of those who live by the sword may well die by it.

What if you are in opposition and something . . . I want government members opposite to think about how you'd feel if you were in opposition. You used a tactic that was open to you, say, petitions. Let us suppose members opposite are in opposition. You use a tactic which is open to you, say, petitions — you file petitions. The government finds that embarrassing, can be time-consuming, and they abolish it.

Imagine as well that you have . . . you enjoy overwhelming support with respect to the petitions. What the government's doing is very unpopular. They say, but we're right, nevertheless. You say, but it's still unpopular. They abolish petitions. I want members opposite to ask themselves how they'd feel in those circumstances. You would feel as if the government in office lacks both a sense of fair play and a sense of respect for how this place

should operate.

As the member from Rosemont pointed out, this place has always been a forum for curbing excesses in the executive branch of governments. That's all it has ever been. It was born with that deeply-felt need. The nobles at the battle of Runnymede in the 11th century were doing what we are doing. They were seeking to curb what they felt to be an excessive use of power by the executive. The Royalists at the time would point out that the use of executive power in England was pale by comparison with its use in some European countries. Nevertheless, they sought to curb that — they sought to curb that.

When parliaments began to be called during the period of the Plantagenets, they did so in an attempt to set some boundaries. They never, ever . . . Parliament never, ever saw itself as the law-making body. It simply set the boundaries and curbed excessive action, often excessive taxation.

That is precisely what we were attempting to do with very widespread public support. At the end of the Tudor monarchy, when the Hanover kings came from Germany and were unable to speak English, the power passed from the monarchs, who could not speak the language and really could not do it, to a cabinet. Once again parliament existed, not to do the work — Sir Robert Walpole and his cabinet — parliament existed to curb excesses; that remained the overarching. And the most important feature of parliamentary government is that parliament, while it has the legal power to do so, very, very rarely does parliament initiate actions; that comes from executive. Parliament is there to curb the excesses of the executive.

(2045)

You seek to take that away. It's very fundamental. And you seek to do so unilaterally, and that's very fundamental. We were prepared to meet with a committee. We were prepared to put on the table for discussion, bell-ringing. We were prepared to go and put that on the table, to make our arguments that we have been making here, in an atmosphere in which people can listen. We were prepared to hear your arguments, and perhaps there is a better way of doing it.

Bell-ringing came into existence, I think, because of a flaw in the parliamentary system. I think bell-ringing came into existence because of the existence — which really is a feature of parliamentary government and not congressional government — only in parliamentary government in England and Canada and the Commonwealth is there such rigid party discipline as to make it impossible to defeat a government. That is a feature which is unique to parliament, to the parliament of England, and those which have taken that institution. It is different elsewhere.

There would be no such problem in France or the United States. There is a problem and a need for that kind of tactic because in a different form of government, what we call a congressional form of government, the legislators are a part of a governmental system; they assist in drafting statutes; budgets are dealt with and formulated in

committees. And that is true in North Dakota; it's true in Washington; it's true in the National Assembly in Paris and throughout almost all of Europe.

Only really in the parliamentary form of government, in England and the Commonwealth, does the legislature have such a restricted role. Only in those countries is the executive given such a free rein. That is why parliaments need the powers they have. They have no ability to prevent the problems from within. If the governor of Nebraska — Nebraska hasn't got a publicly-owned utility, but let's supposing they did. I can't, on my feet . . . Minnesota. The governor of Minnesota proposed that their public utility system be privatized. Let's assume . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. I've allowed the member far-ranging debate, but the question before the Assembly is the changing of rule 33(1), and I ask the member to keep his comments relevant to the process of changing the rules or to rule 33(1).

**Mr. Shillington:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was not attempting to delve into the subject too thoroughly, but I was attempting to make the point that bell-ringing is very much in keeping with what parliaments are.

And I was attempting to point out to those who think otherwise — and it's obvious that most members opposite don't understand how this thing works. Most members opposite say, let's come and debate and discuss it here. What is debated in here is irrelevant. There's no bearing on what goes into the Bill, none at all, never has within living memory.

They are thinking of a congressional form of government where members, in fact, do play a role in what goes into the legislation and what goes into budgets. That is the way their system operates. Ours is different. And members opposite who suggest that we shouldn't have rung the bells, we should have come and debated it, don't understand the limits of a parliamentary form of government. Coming and debating it doesn't change anything in the legislation, doesn't change anything in the budgets, and has not done so within living memory.

The function of this legislature, partially, to provide an alternative to people at elections; to call the government to account, but to act as a check and a brake; and to provide the boundaries within which the government can operate; and to check excessive and excess executive action. That is what we were attempting to do.

When the government opposite unilaterally changes those rules, as this government has done, you change a fundamental part of this institution. This is not a trite problem we're dealing with. We are dealing in many ways with the ability of this legislature to serve one of its primary and, indeed, its most ancient function, and that is to act as a check and a balance, to curb excessive executive action. This government did not invent excess and excessive action.

**An Hon. Member:** — But it practises it well.

**Mr. Shillington:** — The member from Saskatoon University says it practises it well. It certainly has done

that, but it didn't invent it. Parliaments were invented in the Middle Ages to prevent it. They were never invented to govern themselves.

Unlike virtually every other nation, the British parliament was born, not out of revolution but out of a peaceful transition . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Arm River is keeping time for me. That's very generous of him. I always knew the member from Arm River to be a man of generous spirits, and it's deeply appreciated.

So when they . . . The point I'm trying to make to members opposite, who are perhaps as concerned about watching the clock as they are with dealing with the issue . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Why don't you sit down. We'll deal with it.

**Mr. Shillington:** — That's exactly my point. That's exactly the point I've been making. The member from Thunder Creek, I believe it was, said why don't you sit down and we'll deal with it. That is exactly my point. My point is that the bell-ringing is needed as an effective check where you have an executive arm of government which is prepared to ignore everything that is said to them, which is prepared to ignore public opinion, and which has no sense of responsibility to do what the public . . . to provide the kind of government the people want. My very point is that if I sat down and no one spoke, like so many sheep, members opposite would vote away the bell-ringing, and then those who have yet another agenda, the privatization of the Crown corporations, would be free to act in a fashion which the public of the province have said they don't want . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

The member from Arm River promises me 15 consecutive speakers. That would be truly remarkable. There's grave doubt . . . As I said earlier, there's grave doubt that some members opposite can speak with their knees straight. It has never been seen. So it may be possible for some of those members to speak with their knees straight, but I have not seen it; I have not seen some of them. Fifteen of them might speak, I suppose. But given the way this government behaves, they will relentlessly pass this motion and then relentlessly deal with the privatization, notwithstanding the overwhelming public sentiment against it.

So we are not dealing with a trifle. This goes to the very heart of what parliaments are all about. This is, I think, the first time we have used bell-ringing in this sort of a fashion. There is no evidence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the bell-ringing has been abused. I think that really is an accurate statement. This government . . . and that has caused everyone to wonder why this government is so insistent on doing away with it. But there really is no evidence that bell-ringing has ever been abused.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — I know of . . . I can think of four occasions where it has been used. There was the introduction of the energy Bill in Ottawa, where the idea was born, where, as I said, the Liberal government of the day brought in an omnibus Bill which in fact

encompassed four different Bills. It encompassed amendments to the Criminal Code as well as the energy Bill.

The Conservatives said, there is no way we can deal with this Bill; break it up. The Liberals said, like it or lump it. The Conservatives found a rather . . . what was then a unique way of lumping it — they rang the bells. Public opinion was overwhelmingly on the side of the Conservatives, and the government broke up the Bill, and then the House of Commons could deal with it, as it couldn't deal with the omnibus Bill.

The next incident that I remember of any duration was the bell-ringing in Manitoba. One might feel some sympathy for what the Pawley government was trying to do as I do. The Pawley government in that day was ordered by the Supreme Court of Canada to translate its statutes into French, as I recall this; so it proceeded to bring in legislation which would have allowed French translation.

It was monstrously unpopular in Manitoba. Whatever the merits of it, whatever the . . . the fact that the government really had no option and was proceeding as responsibly as it could, meant little. It was very, very unpopular. The Conservatives rang the bells in that case. While I don't agree with the position the Conservatives took on bilingualism, I would readily admit that they had overwhelming public support for what they were doing.

And with the benefit of hindsight, perhaps the government of the day should have found another way of translating the statutes. Perhaps they should have stepped back and said, all kinds of responsible people are most upset with what we're doing; perhaps we shouldn't proceed.

I think that is something that this government opposite should consider. You should consider some of the people who are opposed to you, and you should step back for a moment. At the very least you should step back from the whole thing and say, something's very wrong; maybe there's another way to do it.

The tragedy in this case, of course, Mr. Speaker, is that there is another way to do it. It was suggested by the Minister of Justice — it was he who first raised the issue of an all-parliamentary committee. The Leader of the Opposition responded in a positive fashion, and that's how the matter should have proceeded. But of course it didn't; the government opposite has got enormously stubborn.

(2100)

We believe that there's still room to resolve this matter. We still, Mr. Speaker, believe that a committee can and should work, and we would like to see members opposite consider following up on the suggestion put forth by the member from Kindersley.

We would suggest that if the problem were sent to a committee, this legislature could get back to a more normal schedule. We could deal with the Education estimates; we could deal with the Agriculture estimates; we could deal with the hospital from Gravelbourg — I

know that will be something . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Other issues can certainly be dealt with in the legislature by other motions put forward. If the member wants to put motions on the floor, it can certainly deal with other issues. The issue we're dealing with now is rule 33(1), and I would ask the member to keep relevant to the process of dealing with this motion or with the motion.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Yes, I did stray a bit, Mr. Speaker. I must admit I strayed a bit when I got into the soft underbelly of the Gravelbourg hospital. That probably is somewhat outside the boundaries of rule 33 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The members invite me to talk about the hospital at Lafleche. I don't suppose the Deputy Speaker will invite me to talk about the hospital at Lafleche, and that's the only reason I don't. I would indeed like to discuss the hospital situation in the province. I say to the members opposite, if you would call something other than this silly motion, we could indeed get to discussing the hospital in Gravelbourg versus the hospital in Lafleche.

Members from that area think they've got a story to tell. The problem with this government's relentless pursuit of this motion is that they have no opportunity to tell the story. And that's why we have been inviting members opposite to move to some other item of business. You can always come back to it.

I cannot imagine you bringing back the SPC privatization before the Barber Commission reports, and I therefore think that you won't need the rule, and I therefore think you could safely withdraw this . . . not withdraw it, let it stand, at least for the time being.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we object to the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I will not make the obvious comment that comes to mind. I have always shown respect for the Speaker, and I will do so on all occasions.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to see this government abandon the motion, not just because we are opposed to abolishing the bell-ringing, but very fundamentally we're opposed to this government unilaterally changing the rules as they have been doing.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a history of proceeding in a fashion which is anti-democratic. I want to briefly refer to some of those instances . . . I think what is bothering the child in the gallery is the very bad behaviour of members opposite.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — And I say to the couple, there's no need to take the child out of the Legislative Assembly. The child is a lot better behaved than most members who are sitting on the floor, actually.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — A good deal . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and probably has a better understanding of what's going on — that's right! — than most members

opposite.

I think it most unfair, Mr. Speaker, to remove that small child when he's behaving better and probably has a better understanding of what's happening, and makes every bit as much sense as the members opposite, too.

Mr. Speaker, this government has behaved in a fashion which is not democratic — done so on a number of occasions. We think this rule strikes at the democratic institutions. We think this rule, Mr. Speaker, is an attempt to chip away at our democratic institutions which, as I have attempted to point out, are and always have been an institution which provides a curb on excessive executive action. That's what this place . . . That is how parliaments began. There were those, Mr. Speaker, who felt that parliaments no longer served that function. We have found out, Mr. Speaker, that parliaments still serve that function. Legislatures still serve as a check.

If this is done away with, this institution will lose some of its ability to function. We think members know that. We think they are proceeding, knowing that this institution will be a less effective check. We think they're proceeding, in fact wanting to achieve that result.

This is not the first time this government opposite has proceeded in a fashion which makes it more difficult for public opinion to be felt. This is not the first time this government's tangled with public opinion, lost, and after it loses, changed the rules. This government has done this before. They have a history of so doing.

Their unilateral change of the rules and unilateral abolition of bell-ringing, when it did nothing more than serve to focus public opinion and give public opinion some ability to be effective, reminds me of this government's approach to the ward system.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The ward system isn't up on debate now. I've asked the member previously to keep his comments relevant to process or rule 33(1). I can read out of the members' handbook:

The Speaker, or the Chairman, after having called the attention of the Assembly, or of the committee, to the conduct of a Member who persists in irrelevance, or tedious repetition, either of his own arguments or the arguments used by other members in debate, may direct him to discontinue . . .

So I would ask the member to keep his remarks relevant to the motion before the House.

**An Hon. Member:** — Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — State your point of order.

**Mr. Prebble:** — Mr. Speaker, I ask you to review the member's comments and to look at the fact that he was simply making a comparison between bell-ringing and another closely related . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. That is not a point of order. There's no point of order on the ruling of the Chair.

Why is the member on her feet?

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I just want to reiterate what my colleague, the member from Saskatoon University was saying about the member from Regina Centre's comments when speaking on . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. There's no point of order. I have been listening very closely to the member's comments, from Regina Centre. I have ruled on it, and there is no point of order.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Well we're certainly staying very closely within the limits of the subject under debate when we cannot make comparisons. I have certainly been allowed, Mr. Speaker, to make comparisons on other subjects.

**An Hon. Member:** — Are you challenging the Chair now?

**Mr. Shillington:** — No, I'm not. I said I would obey the ruling.

I was just saying that we are maintaining a very narrow focus on a subject when we cannot make a comparison. I had not, in fact, when interrupted, ever got into the . . . even got into the subject. I just said that they had showed a disdain for public opinion on the issue of the ward system. They had found the exercise of public opinion to be inconvenient, to put it mildly, and so they simply disregarded it, changed the rules, brought back the ward system.

That, in fact, is what you've done here. You didn't find the bell-ringing as inconvenient as you found public opinion. It is public opinion which has . . . It is the expression of public opinion which has bothered you, not the bell-ringing in itself. What is bothering you people, what is bothering you people is not that we are opposed to the introduction of SPC. That isn't what . . . The privatization of SPC . . . That isn't what inspired this motion. What inspired this motion was, and what has brought it on and what has made members opposite so stubborn and bull-headed is, the fact that the public opinion also are opposed to the privatization of SPC, and they're also in favour of retaining bell-ringing.

I was saying, Mr. Speaker, that there's no instance that I know of where bell-ringing has actually been abused, in the sense that it has been used to thwart public opinion. Any time it's been used, it has been used with fairly solid support of public opinion. That was true in Ottawa; it was true in Manitoba. It was used once here; the bells rang for four days. I remember that because I was, in a sense, I was at the centre of the thing.

It's worth going over that previous bell-ringing incident to illustrate how ringing the bells is a safeguard and a protection. While there was not as much at stake there, what occurred was an outrageous violation of the rights of members.

I had made a comment in this Assembly . . . I, in fact, had asked some questions, probably in a rhetorical fashion, about an individual with whom the government had

dealings, by the name of Mark Silver. He owned a company, Silver Developments. I asked some questions and suggested that he had made an improper use of a government employee and had induced that government employee to see that he got the building, and then he came to work for him.

That brought about . . . the comments were made in the Assembly. I was never, in fact, asked to say it outside of the Assembly, so the comments were made in the Assembly and nowhere else.

They sued; I was sued for some \$2 million . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Paid it out of petty cash.

(2115)

**Mr. Shillington:** — And couldn't be paid out of petty cash, and came back. The then Speaker ruled that there had been a prima facie, we called a point of personal privilege. The then Speaker, the current Minister of the Environment, ruled that there had, in fact, been a violation of my privileges as a member, and suggested that the House should deal with it.

There was an obvious and appropriate way for the House to deal with it; that was to insist that the action be withdrawn.

But the member from Lumsden didn't do that. Instead, the then minister of Justice, the member from Lumsden, in effect gave those who were suing me free rein; did so in the face of all the authorities; did so because he simply wished to make life as difficult for me as he could; did so because he didn't care about the rules of the Assembly. He was quite prepared to overlook the rules because the action did, in fact, make my work difficult. It also made the work of any opposition member difficult.

**An Hon. Member:** — Well, what could you have done if you couldn't ring the bells?

**Mr. Shillington:** — And the member quite rightly asked the question I was going to ask: what could we have done if we hadn't been able to ring the bells on that occasion? We did ring the bells. They rang for four days. Then, as now, there was absolutely no support for the government's position. And eventually after four days the government asked the lawyer in charge to withdraw the action, and he did.

In effect, the government resolved the matter, as they should have done initially when the member from Rosetown, the then Speaker, ruled that it had been a violation of my rights.

But ask yourself what you do in such a situation if you can't ring the bells. You cannot function as a . . . And very shortly, if you people keep on your present ways, some of you are going to find out what the role of an opposition member is. Some of you will not, but probably some of you will survive. You will find that you ask questions; you ask questions about people's relationship with the government. It matters not whether or not GigaText have wasted \$39 million . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order, order. The member keeps bringing other issues into the debate which are not relevant to the debate before the Assembly. Other specific issues are not being debated. They can be brought forward to the floor by motion and can be debated. The question before the Assembly is the process of changing the rules and rule 33(1), so I'd ask the member, again, to keep his comments relevant to those issues.

Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder if you would review the comments of the . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It's no point of order.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, let me clarify my comments. I was not getting into the subject of GigaText. I did not raise the specifics of the issue. I was simply making . . . and you didn't let me finish making the argument, just for openers. I was making the argument with respect to GigaText.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. That is another issue . . . Order. Order. Order. The Speaker's on his feet.

No one can deny that the Chair, in the debate, has given members very wide latitude. The member is now speaking about different specific issues, and he's bringing other specific issues into the debate. The debate here is on the changing of the rules, the process, and rule 33(1). I would ask the member to keep his comments relevant to that, and I've already read into the record out of the member's handbook, rule 25(2), which . . . If the member continues to stray from the debate that's before this Assembly, we can call the next speaker.

Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Rolfes:** — Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Could I just ask a question, Mr. Speaker? In the debate in this House . . . I want to ask a question of you and not of the members opposite. I want to ask a question. Can a member not make an argument before a Speaker interferes and makes the assumption for him what his argument is going to be?

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. The member is bringing other specific issues and detail into his speech. Order. When a member is straying . . . If a member is straying and you allow him to finish his point, it could last for a long time before he comes to the nub of the issue.

Order. Order. Order. Order. The member was straying from the debate before the Assembly. I ask the member to get back on the issue. I ask the member to get back on the issue that's before the Assembly.

Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder if you could review the comments of the Minister of Justice and the Minister of

Highways . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Prebble:** — On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with respect to rule 25(2) which states that a member should not persist “in irrelevance, or tedious repetition.” Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to review the comments of the member from Regina Centre . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. The Chair has already ruled on relevance. I would ask . . . There is no point of order. The debate continues.

Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Van Mulligen:** — I’d like to raise a point of order. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I would ask you to examine the remarks of the Minister of Highways . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. There’s no point of order on the ruling of the Chair.

Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Point of order. Mr. Speaker, I don’t want to question the ruling of the Chair, but I would ask you to review the remarks of the Minister of Highways, as distinct from the member from Regina Centre . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. That is not a point of order.

**Mr. Shillington:** — The comment that would’ve been made by the member for Regina Victoria, had he been allowed to make his comment, I think, is that I, in making the argument I was about to make, it was simply the converse of an argument used by the Minister of Highways when he introduced the motion. My argument was simply the converse of his. If his is relevant, so is mine. I was not attempting to get into any other area. The area I mentioned — and I guess I cannot use the name . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — GigaText.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Thank you. The area that I was going to mention is apparently a word I can’t use.

I was going to make the argument though, with respect to it, we couldn’t have raised the issue if we hadn’t had bell-ringing. Members of this . . . And that was the only argument I was going to make. I was not going to get in to discuss the aspects of . . . whatever. I was simply going to make the argument that if we hadn’t had bell-ringing, we never could have raised the issue. And that was the only argument I was going to make. The point I was trying to make to you was that I didn’t want to discuss the details of it — that’s not relevant. But our ability to raise the subject is very, very relevant — very, very relevant.

Remember that this side cannot function if we are subject to legal suits. It is in the nature of the democratic process that most people who are elected to this Assembly are people of average means. There are some wealthy people elected, but they are rare. Most people elected are people

of average means.

Most of the people with respect to whom we raise issues are people not of average means. Most of the people we raise issues with respect to, be they be the Mark Silvers or the — as I say, I guess I can’t say it, but the company from Montreal — most of those people are not of average means. We cannot deal with those issues, we cannot raise them, we cannot ask pointed questions if we’re going to be subject to legal suits.

Our protection from that is central to our ability to function. The point I was going to make is that these people — if it hadn’t been for bell-ringing — these people would have taken that away from me in 1984. They sought to do so, and the only reason that they didn’t take away from me my protection from legal suits was because we had a bell-ringing, and that was the point I was going to make. I was not getting into that issue. That issue is doing just fine without me getting into it. It’s developed a life of its own.

It is an illustration of the point I began to make before all this broke loose, that I don’t think we could have functioned if we hadn’t have had the bell-ringing. It protected us on an important issue. Sounds trivial; for members opposite who may never have sat in opposition, it may seem to you as if a protection from a defamation suit is a trivial thing — it’s not; very expensive.

Defence of a defamation suit will cost 5 to \$10,000. For people of average means — and as I say, most people who get elected are people of average means — that is a prohibitive cost. You must defend yourself from defamation suits; you must not say it. These people in 1984 would have taken that protection away from me. The only reason it didn’t was because we had that ultimate weapon which you only use when you have to, bell-ringing. We used it and we won the day.

I say to the members opposite, whether it is with respect to the federal use of the bell-ringing, whether it’s in Manitoba, whether it’s in Saskatchewan, or whether it’s in . . . I’m not aware of it that bell-ringing has been used anywhere else for this length of time. The bells have always been rung with solid public support, and there is no evidence that bell-ringing has ever been abused.

Bell-ringing in Saskatchewan in 1984, bell-ringing protected the rights of a member. I know that vividly because I was that member at the centre of it. Bell-ringing protected the rights of members in Ottawa in 19 . . . mid-1970’s, I don’t remember the year with precision. The people in Manitoba rang the bells. Whether or not one agrees with the position the Conservatives took, they did so with solid public support.

We did it in 1989 to try to prevent what we felt would have been a tragedy. We think there is reason to believe that if you privatize these Crown corporations, they may be difficult to ever recapture. We think that to some extent this damage is irrevocable. We think we may not be able to undo it. Therefore, we felt very strongly that you should not be taking such a drastic step in the face of, as I said, overwhelming public opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal for a moment with this government's motive in bringing forth the bell-ringing and, I suppose, our motive for opposing it. One has to ask themselves why they feel so strongly; why have they flown in the face of public opinion; why have they incurred the public outrage as they have; what goal does this government seek to achieve. I can't believe that they believe that an abolition of the bell-ringing is necessary for the proper functioning of this legislature.

(2130)

I think the member from Kindersley knew full well that the proper and normal functioning of this legislature did not require an abolition of the bells. When he proposed as he did — I just read it — when he proposed that the matter be sent to a committee, there was in there a recognition that it was nothing urgent, nothing that needed to be dealt with forthwith, and that the traditions of this Assembly which have served us so well, as I stated earlier, the traditions of this Assembly could be respected.

What was it then that causes the government to be so intransigent? What is there that causes the government to stand so firm? We think it relates directly to privatization. We think that if the government had abandoned . . . If the government were to abandon privatization, it would soon abandon this thing and get on with the business of the session.

We think the government wants the bell-ringing motion passed so that they may have a free hand to do whatever they wish with respect to the potash corporation, with respect to SPC, and SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), with the magnificent \$75,000 annual report. We think that's why the government wants to move with it. All the more reason then for us to stand firm.

The member from Kindersley said earlier: why does it work in other areas? It works in other areas because you don't have governments with temperaments like this one. We don't have governments that proceed from a sort of base motions and base motives that this government is.

There is a very useful editorial to which I want to refer ever so briefly. It was printed in the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* on May 11. The editorial, in summary, begins by saying:

The Saskatchewan Tories may end up shooting themselves in the foot by trying to limit legislative bell-ringing to one hour. (The move . . . I guess I've got to read the intervening paragraph. It doesn't make sense.)

If the government changed, they would likely be the first to bear the full punitive brunt of the new measure.

I said that earlier to members opposite. Members should think carefully about what will happen when you are in opposition, as you inevitably will be unless you disappear entirely as the last Conservative government did in 1934. But unless the province is so blessed, some of you are going to be here. You should think very carefully about how you're going to be treated. You should think very

carefully about whether you would want to be the subject of this kind of treatment.

I used the example of the petitions. How would you like it if you were using them with full public support, albeit at great inconvenience to the government, and the government abolished them? You should think about that. The editorial in the *Star-Phoenix* on March 11, in fact, invites you to think about it.

**An Hon. Member:** — May 11.

**Mr. Shillington:** — May 11, right you are. The member from Saskatoon is no doubt familiar with the article. It's too bad he didn't take it to heart.

The editorial then goes on, for the benefit of those who aren't so familiar with it: "The move also makes Tories look thirsty for revenge." It makes the members opposite look thirsty for revenge because there really isn't any other reason why this Bill would . . . why this government would move so relentlessly to pass a Bill that you really don't need.

I made the argument earlier, and I won't repeat it, that you do not need this at least until after the Barber Commission reports. And we were told when it was set up, it wasn't going to report until the fall. We were told by the Premier that the SaskEnergy would not be back before then. You must know that we would not use such a drastic . . . we would not take such a drastic step on anything but SaskEnergy, so you don't need it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Wascana, I'll do him a favour; I will not repeat that remark. The . . . and perhaps do the public of Saskatchewan a favour as well.

The move makes you people look thirsty for revenge because there isn't any other motive. There isn't any other reason why you would be so stubborn about passing it. You don't need it. It is your insistence on proceeding with the unthinkable has meant that the government is morally bound. Important issues which should be dealt with are not being dealt with. Why are you doing it? It would seem that revenge should be a part of it. The editorial then goes on to retrace briefly the history of how this got before the legislature.

Justice Minister Bob Andrew filed notice of his plans to introduce the motion only hours after the NDP returned to the House. In doing so, he circumvented an established process for changing House rules. Andrew had to admit he couldn't remember a time a rule change hadn't come from the legislature's all-party rules committee.

Then they go on to say, and this is the very point I was trying to make to the members:

The government could at least have waited for the issue to cool down a bit, then introduced the measure through accepted channels. This heavy-handed tactic isn't likely to win public favour, considering the significant level of support for the bell-ringing move.

One would ask members opposite, and I do ask members,

to consider how you must appear to the public. I haven't seen any recent polls, but your standing must be very, very low.

There are a number of factors going into that, but one of them is your high-handed, arrogant approach to government. Members opposite insist on proceeding with their agenda even if there is a significant level of public opposition, as there is in this case. Members should give some thought to try and do something about your public image.

One of the things you could do is to try to appear a little more flexible, a little readier to accept public opinion, to work with the opposition. If members were to set aside this motion, proceed with other business, at least pretend they want to govern — governing includes working with an opposition.

This is not . . . For the benefit of members opposite, this is not some banana republic. This is a province with deeply ingrained democratic institutions, a province which has operated by consensus, more so than many other provinces. And it's something members opposite ought to take into account. This public is not . . . The public of Saskatchewan are not used to seeing governments proceed in an arbitrary and high-handed fashion.

This is a province with a co-operative background. I'm not going to get into that in great detail, but one should remember that the people of this province are different than they are in other provinces. We have a different history.

As the former member from Elphinstone, Allan Blakeney, used to say, more than half of the people in Saskatchewan are neither of French or British origin, and Saskatchewan's the only province in which that's true. We have a very co-operative history.

People expect, in this province, expect to work with other people; they expect governments to work with oppositions. They do not expect governments to proceed in a high-handed, arbitrary, dictatorial fashion.

Mr. Speaker, I had a guest, a number of guests at our house over the weekend; one of them was an American, actually grew up in California. She made a comment that Canadians are very, very polite; they also will go to extraordinary lengths to reach a consensus.

She said that . . . often sees at organizational meetings — she's involved in, as it happens, the Open Door Society. She said they go to extraordinary lengths to reach a consensus. The views of minorities attempt to work it into the total mix. So very different from California. In California, a decision is made, 51 per cent carry the day, and very little attempt is made to incorporate the views of the minorities.

But the single, most striking thing about the Canadian experience was, she put it, was how polite we are. I think, while her observation is accurate, I think she has not described it very well. I think Saskatchewan people believe in consensus building, they believe that society operates the best when we operate with a consensus. That

has certainly been a part and parcel of the history of this legislature.

One of the reasons why members . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . that really escapes me. The member from Souris-Cannington says I am making the case for the government. It is really hard to understand how one could say that you're building a consensus when you're proceeding in a fashion opposed by 67 per cent of the Saskatchewan people. That's not ignoring the views of a minority, that's ignoring the views of a majority. So the views of the member from Souris-Cannington are rather hard to understand. No doubt the member from Souris-Cannington will want to get on his feet at an appropriate time and to speak in this.

Mr. Speaker, I say to members opposite, and I will leave it, that your high-handed approach has lost you the few friends you have. And I'm going to read again:

This heavy-handed tactic isn't likely to win public favour, considering the significant level of support for the bell-ringing move.

Then it goes on:

The government claimed the NDP would have refused any change. But both sides may well have come to a compromise, if change is indeed necessary. (The editorial goes on.) There does not appear to be any pressing need for a rule change.

The next sentence is the point that must be bitter gall in the mouths of members opposite:

Saskatchewan is no worse off because the bells jangled for a record 17 days over the SaskEnergy issue. In fact, the public is probably better informed. People were spurred to take up the argument — the discussion took place everywhere, around kitchen tables and in taxicabs.

What must be bitter gall to members opposite is that that, in fact, is a universal view in Saskatchewan, is that the bell-ringing didn't do any harm. The vast majority of people think it did a lot of good.

I say to members opposite, you ought to think about what that means. What it means is, for you people, that you need to change tacks, you need to change courses . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Shellbrook-Torch River says, sit down. We'll do that.

Once members on this side are finished making their comments as thoroughly and completely as they are able to do so, then this government has every intention of passing the bell-ringing and then getting on to their real agenda, which is the privatization of SPC and SaskEnergy and SGI. Members have learned nothing and, I guess, have forgotten nothing as well.

(2145)

The editorial then goes on:

The stand-off also got political action — the government will delay legislative debate while a panel it appointed travels the province.

I may say, Mr. Speaker, that the panel which is travelling the province, I doubt will make a major contribution to the discussion. Certainly the panel of bureaucrats which travelled the province did not contribute very much to the discussion. They failed to attract . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — At least they told the truth.

**Mr. Shillington:** — They did, but they told it in a vacuum. If they told the . . . The member from Saskatoon says they told the truth. If they did, they told it in a vacuum because there was nobody there listening.

**An Hon. Member:** — Nobody knows whether they did or not.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Nobody knows whether they did or not.

**An Hon. Member:** — The member for Saskatoon Mayfair.

**Mr. Shillington:** — The member from Saskatoon Mayfair will no doubt be interested in considering whether or not anything that's said in a vacuum is of any relevance.

The Opposition was also able to accurately measure the acceptance of the bell-ringing tactic, returning to the legislature when the people felt the point had been made.

Again, members opposite asked me why we returned. We returned because we felt the point had been made. Public opinion had expressed itself in the clearest possible fashion. This government had to be aware of it, and we think the government is aware of it, but is simply choosing to ignore it.

**An Hon. Member:** — You knew you weren't winning out there.

**Mr. Shillington:** — The member from Lloydminster says we weren't winning. Indeed we were. I said earlier — the member may not have been listening — I said earlier that the polls showed . . . if all of the polls are accurate, then we enjoyed more public support when we came back then we did when we left.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — I'll conclude this . . . and it is just about concluded:

In this case, a legislative rule allowed the public to become more directly involved in democracy.

Comments of the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*.

The government needs to make a much stronger case for changing this rule.

What is the motive for this government's behaviour? Either they are completely irrational — gone mad, in a

word — either they're flouting public opinion and behaving in a high-handed and arrogant fashion because they are suicidal, or they want to change this rule so that they can return full bore with the privatization of SPC, the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, and SGI.

The public have said, we don't want it. They continue to say, we don't want it. Mr. Speaker, we had some people over . . . with the constituencies boundaries legislation, if it's passed, the riding of Regina Centre will disappear from the electoral map if it's passed. Mr. Speaker, we had what may well be our last function together.

We met on Saturday evening. I went into the Safeway store to get some supplies for the barbecue. It took me a good half-hour, and I only got two items — carried one in each hand. It took me a good half-hour to get to the till, because I had people coming to me whom I didn't know at all. I don't have any reason to believe that they're in my riding — the store serves a wide area. People would say, keep up the good work; don't let the people away with it; keep at them. They were clearly, in the most unmistakable terms, urging us to continue to oppose this.

They share the same fear. Those people that I met on Saturday afternoon share the same fear that I share, and that I think members here share, and that is that the government's motive for doing away with the bell-ringing is a desire to move the potash legislation through.

Mr. Speaker, this government, in seeking to do away with the bell-ringing, this government seeks to stymie the full and free expression of public opinion. That's really what they're doing. The bell-ringing in this case, in the previous case in 1984, in the '70s in Manitoba, and in the late '70s in Ottawa, bell-ringing gave expression to public frustration — gave effective expression to public frustration.

When these people seek to do away with bell-ringing, you seek to limit the full and free expression of public opinion, and what is far more important, you seek to stymie the effective expression of public opinion.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — This isn't the first time that this government is . . . and if this were an isolated incident, I think I would be a great deal more generous to members opposite. If this government behaved as other governments behave, I would say, anybody can make a mistake once. This isn't the first time this government has gone out of its way to stymie the free expression of public opinion. You have a history of it. And as you do it again and again, we become more determined in our opposition, and the public become more determined in their support of us and their attempt to ensure that we will not let this pass.

Mr. Speaker, there are any number of examples of it. I know that you do not want us discussing other issues in detail, and I will not do so. But I will list, relatively quickly, a couple of other instances where this government has shown a disdain for the democratic process.

Mr. Speaker, I — and this is sort of working backwards in time, the Provincial Auditor's report. The Provincial Auditor filed a report in something less than complimentary terms. What happened? It was the subject of a vicious personal attack, again an attempt to thwart public opinion, an attempt to ensure that it is not accountable ... (inaudible interjection) ... It does indeed. It does indeed. Oh, it does indeed, I say to the member from ... If the member from Lloydminster would listen, I would explain ... If the member from Lloydminster would explain ...

I say to you that when you abolish the bell-ringing you seek to make this place less effective. You seek to make it to be a less effective institution. When you attack its legislative officers, you are doing the same thing. You're making it less effective.

I'm not going to get into the Provincial Auditor's report in detail. I simply say to members opposite, there is a pattern of behaviour here. There's a pattern of behaviour in your seeking to limit the effectiveness of this institution. You did it with the Provincial Auditor's report when you subjected him to a vicious personal attack. You've done ...

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order, order. I must draw your attention to citation 316 (i) which says that members must not:

reflect upon the past acts and proceedings of the House;

The hon. member knows that we dealt with that recently. It's a proceeding which we've dealt with, and therefore we cannot allow you to reflect upon it again.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Shillington:** — I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if you would give that very careful consideration. I think there is a new interpretation being put on that particular rule, and I simply ask you to consider the following comment — I simply ask you to consider the following comment. Heretofore, that rule has meant that you cannot call into question a decision of this Assembly. What you're saying is we cannot discuss ...

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. I've ruled on it, and I don't want to debate with the hon. member, but I just draw that to his attention.

**Mr. Shillington:** — I wasn't particularly quarrelling. I wasn't, I may say, quarrelling with the Speaker. I simply invited the ... I invite you to consider the breadth of that particular section if you carry it to an extreme.

**An Hon. Member:** — What does the cartoon say, Ned?

**Mr. Shillington:** — It has heretofore been ... I think that might be violating the injunction which the Speaker has just placed upon me, not to discuss other issues.

But I say, Mr. Speaker ... And I'll leave it at that. That section should be given a very narrow interpretation.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite, who have been assisting me all night with a variety of comments, are fairly silent when I say to them that the motive of this government is to, in pushing the bell-ringing, is to pass the privatization. Member opposite say very little. No one says, nonsense, no one says, it's not true. There isn't the usual cacophony of calls describing both my intelligence and integrity and ancestry. All of that is lacking.

The members opposite are fairly quiet. I say that provides some evidence that in fact members opposite know what I say is true, that your motive for bringing in this must be so that you will have a free hand with privatization. The member says there are other factors involved, including the limited understanding of members opposite of the politics. I think that's probably true as well.

Mr. Speaker, as that editorial pointed out ... The member from Maple Creek has missed a great deal of ...

**An Hon. Member:** — A dazzling speech.

**Mr. Shillington:** — A dazzling speech and a great deal of amount of wisdom. Well I think, you know, for the benefit of the member from Maple Creek, who's been absent, I think I should start this speech again where I left off.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The hon. member has referred to the absence of a member. I'd like him to apologize.

**Mr. Shillington:** — I didn't hear you. I didn't hear the comment.

**The Speaker:** — The member referred to the absence of the member from Maple Creek. Would he apologize now?

**Mr. Shillington:** — I'll apologize to the member of Maple Creek for making that comment. It was made not intending to be critical. There are good reasons why members are sometimes out of the House, especially ... particularly ... Well I wasn't in any sense ...

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order. Let's just calm down and not make a mountain out of a molehill. Would the member continue his remarks on rule 33(1).

**Mr. Shillington:** — Thank you. Sometimes it just goes to show, sometimes by complaining about a problem you can, in fact, draw a great deal of attention to it. I'm not sure the member from Maple Creek accomplished a good deal with that interjection.

I wanted to say to members ... I want to make the point to members ...

**An Hon. Member:** — Hey your shirt tail's hanging out.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Is it really? Isn't that important. The member from Kindersley is ...

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. It's almost 10. If the hon. members would just kind of take a deep breath for a minute or two, we'll get through the evening.

Order, order.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, I was saying that . . . The members opposite, Mr. Speaker, want to call it 10 o'clock. I have not yet begun; I have not yet got through the introduction to my comments. I'm only nicely getting started and they wish to cut me off in midstream. The unmitigated gall of members opposite to deny me . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Being 10 o'clock, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2.

The Assembly adjourned at 10 p.m.