

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you, and through you to members of the legislature, a city councillor who is seated in the opposition gallery.

Doreen Hamilton is a hard-working councillor in her second term right now. She topped the polls in Regina in the last civic election. I urge all members to join me right now in welcoming Councillor Hamilton to the legislature.

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

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a group of 24 grade 8 students from St. Catherine School who are seated in your gallery. They are here for a visit to the legislature. I am going to be meeting with them for pictures and for drinks later on, and a discussion of the proceedings of the House.

They're accompanied by Dan Folk and Ernie Nadon. I hope that they will enjoy their stay here and find it informative, and that it will be useful to them in days to come as they prepare for their final exams some time later this month. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Hodgins:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to, on behalf of the member for Indian Head-Wolseley, introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, a group of grade 12 students seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. These students are from the Sedley High School in Sedley, Saskatchewan. They are on tour here this afternoon, and I do understand that they will be meeting with the member for Indian Head-Wolseley a little bit later in the day. I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming this group of students from Sedley, Saskatchewan.

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

**The Speaker:** — I'd just like to point out to our guests, who we are always happy to see, that their participation in the proceedings are not part of the House procedure.

**Mr. Swenson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you, and through you to the other members of the legislature, 23 grade 7 and 8 students from Briercrest School in Briercrest, Saskatchewan. They are located in the west gallery. They are accompanied by their teacher, Ralph Light, and chaperon Mary Tremain.

Briercrest is about 15 miles down the CN tracks from my place, and even though I might know some of the students personally, I'm sure I know most of their parents. I hope that you have a good visit to the legislature today, that you enjoy watching the proceedings in question period.

And I'll be meeting with the students afterwards for a visit and pictures and refreshments, and we'll discuss what you've seen. Give us a passing or a failing grade on our performance as MLAs, as I know your teachers will soon be doing with your final exams at the end of June.

Please help me welcome the students from Briercrest.

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

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Wage Gap Between Men and Women

**Mr. Romanow:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Human Resources, Labour, (and Employment). Mr. Minister, in the last several years statistics show that the average wage earned by a woman in Saskatchewan actually fell by about 2.5 per cent when compared to a similar job performed by a male, and that now stands on average, the salary return, about 66 per cent of the equivalent salary for a male worker, or about two-thirds.

Mr. Minister, are you aware that in every other province except Nova Scotia, the wage gap has actually narrowed, while here in Saskatchewan it's gone in reverse and widened. How do you explain this injustice — it can only be described as an injustice — and, more importantly, what are your government's plans to deal with the problem?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, first of all I will point out that this government has taken procedures to help remedy the wage gap between males and females. But the labour laws of this province are the same labour laws that the Leader of the Opposition passed when he was in government, and if he concedes that they are not proper, we will examine them; and as a matter of fact, we are examining them with a new employments standards Act, the new employment benefits Act.

In Saskatchewan and other places, one of the key problems is choice of occupation, and it turns out that men have been choosing occupations that pay more. We have equal pay for equal work in this province, and men have been choosing certain occupations; men, through their unions and their seniority, have been able to attain higher wages in some of those occupations. And also we have a situation of education, and it is important that my department has stressed ever since I was minister, and part of that, that women seek out education that will give them higher incomes.

We have set a record for women going into business — 52 per cent of new businesses are started by women. We also know that with our commodity prices down, business is not a high income profession these days, and that explains some of the difficulties. It is not a problem for just women, it is a problem for men and women, and they're solved through economic solutions.

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

**Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the minister. I'm not talking about the difficulty of finding jobs which are equivalent for men and for women — we know that's the case in the province of Saskatchewan under your administration. I'm talking about the gap, the wage gap, the discrimination between working women and working men. And it's not correct to say about the labour laws. It was your government that amended the labour laws, Bill 104, the infamous labour law. It's your government that has only introduced one minimum wage increase in seven years of office since 1982, and I think that's only 25 cents. That's your government, sir.

Now, Mr. Minister, my question to you is this: in recent years in the country the wage gap between men and women — this is what I direct your attention to, Mr. Minister — has closed by only about 7.5 per cent. Here in Saskatchewan, as I say, your government seems intent on turning back that clock. And you stand on this record, talking about all kinds of factors which are not relevant to the issue before you today.

Mr. Minister, will you stand in this House and tell the women of the province of Saskatchewan, tell the legislature, that your government takes this problem seriously; but more importantly than just the commitment of taking the problem seriously, how about specific, hard information as to a comprehensive strategy to close that gap? What is your strategy to so overcome this injustice?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday we were criticized for part of the strategy. I can't display this in the House, Mr. Speaker; I'll keep it down. But this is a pamphlet. Yesterday I was accused of putting out a pamphlet, "Focus on your Future", to grades 7, 8, and 9, and I was criticized for that. We are getting at the root of the problem, and that is education for everyone, male and female.

Yesterday I was criticized for this pamphlet that I can't show in the House, and it costs 56 cents per pamphlet to deliver it to students to encourage them to stay in school. It gives role models for young women — a computer sales person, a publisher that are women. It talks about jobs and education, and it is aimed at men and women in the school system. And then yesterday we were criticized for this plan which costs 56 cents per person to encourage people to stay in school and become entrepreneurs, to become employers, and to become professionals where they will have higher paying jobs.

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

**Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the minister, and I really do beg the minister's attempt to try to answer the question that I'm putting to him. We're not concerned here about a pamphlet and education, because I want to tell you, there are as many well-educated women in the work force as there are educated men in the work force, and they get paid less — only two-thirds.

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

**Mr. Romanow:** — They get paid less, two-thirds. Those are the statistics.

Now my question to you, sir, is this: will this government, will your government, will the Premier and this legislature — will you undertake today to tell us that you're going to introduce a pay equity Bill for government employees? That's a small step that can begin now, something that would at least solve the problem directly under your jurisdiction — a pay equity Bill for the workers of the civil service in the government.

And at the same time, can you undertake to tell the legislature whether you're going to make government contract compliance with pay equity also a part of that legislation. If you did that, at least you'd show some serious intent to overcome this injustice. How about it?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, government employees should have pay equity, and if there are instances where that doesn't happen, then clearly there's something wrong with the collective agreement that has been negotiated between this government and the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union), which is amply represented by the members of the opposition. And clearly, if there's a problem there, it should be negotiated in the contract, which comes up every second year.

And so if the members opposite think that there's something deficient in the contract, then they can consult themselves, because they are also part of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour by their constitution. They can consult themselves, and we will negotiate a proper contract.

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

### Facilities to Treat Spousal Abuse

**Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Labour. Mr. Minister, one of the most grievous concerns facing our society today is spousal abuse. The services we have in this province to deal with the problem are overtaxed, as you know. Women and children fleeing violent situations often do not have any place to go.

For example, in Saskatoon there were 256 families turned away last year; in Regina, 167 families turned away; in North Battleford, 62 families turned away. And those are some of the statistics, Mr. Minister.

Could you explain why your government only increased the grants to transition houses in this province by less than the rate of inflation, when you had 5.25 million for Guy Montpetit to line his pockets?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, the members of the opposition conveniently forget about the Saskatchewan

pension plan which has been primarily to the benefit of women in Saskatchewan. They didn't think of it, so it's not any good if they didn't think of something, and anything this government has done is wrong, even if it helps people.

They haven't considered that the Department of Justice . . . and the Leader of the Opposition was attorney general for 11 years and did not crack down like our ministers of Justice have on the crimes of spousal abuse, which are actually assault, not abuse. This government has cracked down and prosecuted those crimes.

This government has more than doubled the money spent on assisting families — more than doubled it. I have another \$700,000 for family support centres in this budget which we cannot get approved because the members went on strike for 17 days, and now they complain nothing is being done.

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

**Ms. Simard:** — A new question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. It has not been demonstrated, Mr. Minister, that the pension plan in any way benefits low income women.

You're quite right — you are spending a lot to assist families like Guy Montpetit and George Hill's family and Paul Schoenhals' family . . .

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

**Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Minister, the federal government last year developed a program which provides 22.2 million for the construction of transition houses. Saskatchewan's share of that money is 608,000, which Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation estimates that this money would have provided 19 emergency shelter spaces in this province. The only catch is that your government has to be prepared to make a commitment of operating funds for these shelters before CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) will provide the money.

Now we have a situation in northern Saskatchewan where La Ronge women and families have to flee to P.A.(Prince Albert) to get to shelter. We have a situation in rural Saskatchewan where . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, order. Order. The hon. member, I think, should be getting to her question.

**Ms. Simard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a situation where rural women have to flee to the city, so my question to you, Mr. Minister, is: with all that in mind, could you tell us how many emergency shelter spaces have been constructed in this province with the money provided by the federal government?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, the members of the opposition have forgotten that the \$700,000 that is in my budget for family support centres, to support families in need, is being held up by the filibustering tactics of the members of the opposition. It's being held up by the striking of the opposition . . .

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — The opposition is more interested in politics than they are in families, and therefore I cannot free up the money to support families in the manner we would like to.

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

**Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Speaker, I welcome the minister to bring forward the estimates this afternoon — this afternoon.

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

**Ms. Simard:** — We'll deal with it. We'll deal with it this afternoon.

Now, Mr. Minister, you never answered my question.

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order. Order. Order, order.

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

**Ms. Simard:** — Mr. Minister, given that your government has \$20 million a year to spend on political advertising, when are you going to get with it and establish more transition homes in this province? You have access to federal funding. Are you going to get with it, Mr. Minister?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, if we bring forward this spending proposal, and if the members of the opposition find that the money is not spent in the manner they approve, paid to the people that they think should receive the money, if their friends are not hired for these jobs, then what assurance do I have that they won't walk out of the legislature on strike again?

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

### Families Living in Poverty

**Ms. Atkinson:** — My question is also directed towards that minister. Mr. Minister, under the rule of the PC government, increasing poverty has become a fact of life in this province. Between 1981 and 1986, the number of families living in poverty in our province increased by 6,000 families. Seventy per cent of Saskatchewan children living in female-headed, single parent families are now living below the poverty line. Forty-five per cent of all food bank users in our province are children.

Saskatchewan has the second highest poverty rate in Canada. One in four children, or 64,560 children, are growing up in poverty. Mr. Minister, where are your policies to deal with this disgraceful situation?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, we do not deny that things have been tough on the farm, and therefore the people who elected us have been going with less and less

income. The people of rural Saskatchewan predominantly had less income due to world economic situation. And then how do you calculate that poverty? When my constituents live on less money than your constituents, and my constituents can still feed their children, then I say that you got to go to the character of the people and what they can do with their dollar.

The people of Saskatchewan are not living in poverty. Yes, there are people who could have more money; there are people who could have a higher standard of living.

Unfortunately, the members of the opposition filibuster and go on strike when we tried to introduce legislation that will build jobs for people, jobs that will employ people so that they can have a higher income and take better care of their families. When we do that, they're filibustered by the members of the opposition. They're against jobs. What are they for?

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — This government used the excuse that things have been tough on the farm. Well your government's been tough on the people of our province.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Now let's look at the facts. A family headed by a single mother with two children, collecting social assistance from your government, after the basic rent and utilities allowance would have \$78 a week left over. According to Agriculture Canada, it takes \$80 a week to feed a family. So before adding in the cost of clothing, transportation, personal and household effects, this family is already \$2 in the hole a week.

Would you care to explain to these families why your government felt it necessary to ensure that months after he had blown \$4 million of taxpayers' money, you were willing to ensure that Mr. Guy Montpetit of Montreal was receiving \$18,000 per month in a travel allowance.

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, given the opportunity to let democracy take its course and let this House deal with legislation and estimates, I am prepared to bring in a Bill that will allow my department to crack down on single fathers or whoever it is that is responsible for the care of these children.

Yes, I agree, single mothers should not bear the total responsibility of raising and supporting children, nor should the state and single mothers bear the total responsibility.

I am prepared, should democracy take its course in this Assembly, to bring in a Bill that will crack down on every father who does not support his children, so that those children have enough to eat, they have clothes and books, and that those women do not have struggle while the men run around doing nothing.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — New question to the minister who seems to avoid the answers to the questions. Now, Mr. Minister, many working women are earning the minimum wage, a wage your government has increased by nothing since August of 1985. That's practically four years, Mr. Minister, and expenses have gone up in this province, as everyone knows. A single person earning minimum wage in this province receives \$1,653 below the poverty line, and many of our minimum wage workers in this province are women trying to raise families.

With these women working day in and day out to hold their families together, Mr. Minister, how does your government explain paying \$200,000 a year to George Hill to mismanage the Rafferty-Alameda project and privatize SPC (Saskatchewan Power Corporation), and \$100,000 a year to Paul Schoenhals to privatize the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan? How do you explain that to the working poor in this province, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, I say to those people in this province who are poor, that the solution for them is not welfare but jobs. And to have jobs you have to have management. To have good management you have to pay for good management. Good management's wages are justified. The poor employ no one, so therefore we have to have employers and employees.

The members opposite don't understand that. You cannot work for no one; you have to work for someone. There have to be employers and employees. There has to be a total economy. Simply raising the minimum wage, which would also raise the price of clothing and hamburgers, is not going to be a magic cure. We have to build jobs.

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

#### Licensed Day-care Spaces in Saskatchewan

**Mr. Prebble:** — My question is to the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Minister, I have here the latest report from the National Council of Welfare regarding day care, and it shows that this province under your government has the second lowest number of licensed day-care spaces for our population of any province in Canada.

Mr. Minister, in this province there are licensed day-care spaces for only 7 per cent of the children of working parents compared with 13 per cent of the national average, and in rural Saskatchewan only 6 per cent of all the spaces in the province are in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister.

Now this is truly a shocking situation and my question to you is this: how do you explain to Saskatchewan families your government's appalling record that has led to a situation where we have fewer licensed day-care spaces for our population than any province in Canada other than Newfoundland?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the member of the opposition asked that question because he

and his colleagues are holding up the child care Act that we are proposing to pass. The . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order, order.

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — In addition, under the regulations that the government has operated under and that the former government set, all the other provinces have commercial child care and non-profit, parent-run child care. This province has made it illegal for about 15 years to have anything other than parent-run child care. So the other provinces have had the benefit of more child care because we have outlawed a large amount of the child care that we could have had. We have to address the question of accessibility rather than the ideology on child care.

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

**Mr. Prebble:** — New question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I say to you, bring in your child care legislation today and we'll debate it in this House.

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

**Mr. Prebble:** — But we are proud of our record which is ensuring that funds spent on child care will go to the support of children, and not to the support of profits for private commercial operators.

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

**Mr. Prebble:** — I have a new question, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the minister's day-care Act. And that is, Mr. Minister, that your day-care Bill will restrict the percentage of spaces which are eligible for subsidy in existing non-profit, day-care co-ops or family day-care homes. Now, Mr. Minister, more than 90 per cent of the spaces in these non-profit day cares are subsidized right now. So my question is this . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. That's what I was going to mention to the member, that he was taking a long preamble and should get to his question, which he is, which he is.

**Mr. Prebble:** — Mr. Minister, my question is this: any attempt to restrict the subsidy of spaces in those day-care co-ops will drive them under. Isn't that really your objective, Mr. Minister, to restrict the subsidies to the non-profit child care centres in order to increase the subsidies to the private commercial centres, and to ensure that clientele will go there while the non-profit co-ops are driven under? Isn't that the real purpose of your day \_care legislation?

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

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, the member of the opposition is behaving in true radical fashion, playing to the TV cameras and to the crowd in the theatre here, using false . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. If hon. members are going to intrude with a constant stream of interruptions, we can't hear the minister, and I'm sure all

our guests as well as the members would like to hear.

**Hon. Mr. Schmidt:** — Mr. Speaker, we are going to do something so radical as pay subsidies to the parents, and the members opposite say, shame, subsidizing the parents who are in need.

The members of the opposition have no policies. The only one I can think of is their ding-ding policy of ringing bells. If I can get an assurance that they will respect democracy and vote on the Bill, we will bring it in.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

## 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:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to address a comment with respect to the remarks made by the minister. If indeed child care or families in poverty were a priority, one would have thought the Government House Leader would have called that today, not this silly motion.

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

**Mr. Shillington:** — The minister knows full well, Mr. Speaker, that the Government House Leader can call anything. And if the legislation was a priority, one would have thought . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. The hon. member knows that that debate has been finished. We're on a new debate, rule 33(1), and I ask him to direct his remarks to that.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was only pointing out, and I will not belabour the point that we are on bell-ringing, because nothing else seems to be their priority except this.

We have repeatedly, Mr. Speaker, suggested that the Government House Leader stand consideration of this — it is nobody's priority except theirs — and go to something that is of some importance.

Mr. Speaker, I'm being invited by members opposite to vote . . .

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

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order, order. Order! I ask both sides of the House to co-operate. Allow the hon. member from Regina Centre to proceed with his remarks.

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

**Mr. Shillington:** — I was being invited by the Premier to vote for democracy, Mr. Speaker. The most effective vote that could take place would be a general election in this province.

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

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, we have suggested to members opposite, to the Government House Leader and to the members of the cabinet, that there is no need for this legislation. There is no pressing necessity for it. The only reason that they are continue, obstinately and stubbornly, to insist that this matter be dealt with in advance of everything else is, I think, in part a pettiness, in part, Mr. Speaker, if you just had . . . in part, Mr. Speaker, they have a hidden agenda.

Their hidden agenda is to bring back SPC, the SPC privatization. Their hidden agenda is to bring it back, ram it through notwithstanding, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the public have said no.

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

**Mr. Shillington:** — The public have said SaskPower should not be not be privatized. They have said SaskPower should remain a public utility. Mr. Speaker, they're . . . either the members opposite are totally irrational, and there's some evidence that that is the case, or their motive for proceeding with this and insisting that this be proceeded with is that they want to bring back the privatization of SPC and turn it over to their friends instead of having that public utility serve the public of Saskatchewan as it has done so well for the last 40 years.

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

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, we have suggested to members opposite that there is no need for this legislation. We have suggested to members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that there is unlikely to be another bell-ringing incident unless they bring back SPC.

We have suggested to them, Mr. Speaker, that there's other priorities. We had a good deal today to say about the role of women in our economy. It is pathetic, Mr. Speaker. We ought to be discussing those issues and dealing with measures which would advance the role of women in our economy instead of this bit of pettiness on the part of members opposite . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, the member from Rosthern invites us to vote it off. We think, Mr. Speaker, the suggestion made by the Minister of Justice initially, and that is it go to a committee, is a far sounder notion.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice made a suggestion in this Assembly, suggested that this matter could be dealt with best in a committee. We agreed with that. The member from Riversdale said, in responding to that, that it was a positive suggestion. He said we would consider it in a day or so. Mr. Speaker, we did; we responded positively. We had an agreement, in fact, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. I think we should just let

this debate continue without sub-debates taking place. Each member will have their opportunity, and right now it's the member from Regina Centre.

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

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster seems to think that anyone who opposes this government's a radical. I don't know whether or not he's at all bothered by the fact that two-thirds of Saskatchewan people oppose this government.

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

**Mr. Shillington:** — I don't know whether that gives him any cause for thought or not, Mr. Speaker. If members opposite were a little less stubborn, a little less intransigent, and a little more thoughtful and in touch; if they spent a little more time in their riding and less hitting the high spots, here and abroad, the members opposite would know what I am saying, and that is that the public don't want the SPC privatization. They do not want SaskPower to be sold to their friends, for the benefit of their friends. They want Saskatchewan Power to remain a public utility so that it will serve the public of Saskatchewan in the outstanding fashion which it has done for the last 37 years.

Mr. Speaker, I want to . . . Since in fact this is, in every real sense, a debate about the future of SPC, the Saskatchewan Power Corporation, I want to touch for a moment — and I won't spend an inordinate amount of time on it — but I want to spend just a moment on some of the reasons why we think, and I think the public think, that SaskPower should remain a public utility for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite — I think those who are honest with themselves, Mr. Speaker — I think members opposite would admit that this debate would never be taking place had they not decided to break an election promise and privatize Saskatchewan Power. That undertaking to the people of Saskatchewan, given to the public before this government was elected in 1986, was given in the most unmistakable terms.

Mr. Speaker, the former member from Regina Elphinstone, Mr. Blakeney, in the election, revealed and displayed documents which suggested that the government was considering the privatization of SaskTel and the Saskatchewan Power Corporation. Members opposite not only denied it but acted with outrage at the very suggestion. They said members of this Assembly on this side were scare mongering, telling untruths . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Hear, hear.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Well the member says, hear, hear; hear, hear. I may say to the member from Rosthern, if you really meant that, then you'd feel some pangs of conscience about the fact that the member from . . . that Mr. Blakeney was in fact accurately prophesying the future when he said that they would be privatized. And you should feel some pangs of conscience about that fact, and about the fact that the Premier clearly . . . the Premier's undertaking, so clearly given, was broken. You

ought to feel some pangs of conscience about that.

So when the member says, hear, hear, it's very strange that he can say, hear, hear, and still sit in this Assembly and vote for a motion which is ultimately going to . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — You won't let us vote. Let's vote.

**Mr. Shillington:** — The member from Rosthern is anxious to vote. The member from Rosthern is anxious to cast his vote. I say to the member from Rosthern, the only reason that you're anxious to cast your vote with respect to the bell-ringing is that you want to get on to the privatization of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation.

If this government did not have an agenda for privatization . . . Mr. Speaker, if members opposite didn't have that agenda, this wouldn't be on the agenda either.

Mr. Speaker, I remember the Premier stating, with what has turned out to be such delicious irony, that privatization would be the NDP's Alamo. Well indeed, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what it has been. As is the case with so many things, the Premier is an admirer of things which are American but not a very deep student of them.

(1445)

Mr. Speaker, it has indeed become our Alamo. This issue has indeed become our Alamo. It's worthwhile reminding members of the Assembly that the Alamo was a Texan fort. At the time of the battle, Texas was a province of Mexico, and had been for 200 years prior to that a Spanish province; defended by never more than a hundred Texan irregulars, including the famous frontiersman, Daniel Boone; was besieged by a massive army from Mexico City of 300,000 people. It is true that in the short run the Texans lost, but, Mr. Speaker, the Alamo and the outrage which Texas people felt at that slaughter had a galvanizing effect upon the people of that province. It enabled a hard-drinking card-sharp from Tennessee by the name of Sam Houston to raise an army and to forge that far-flung province of Mexico into a community and a nation, and 18 months later the Mexican's suffered overwhelming defeat at San Jacinto.

So indeed, I think the Alamo is the NDP's . . . indeed, I think privatization is the NDP's Alamo. Whether or not we suffered any sort of a setback in the short run is, I suppose, yet to be decided. But there is a lesson in the Alamo for members opposite. The lesson is that overwhelming numbers, combined with overwhelming arrogance, can often lead to disaster. Many historians believe that if the Mexican general, Santa Anna, had allowed the Texans to go free, he would have easily won the War of Independence.

So I say to members opposite, when the Premier said this is our Alamo, I think it's going to be just that. I think it may in the short run be a setback, but in the long run it's going to propel the member from Riversdale into the Premier's office, just as it propelled Sam Houston into the governor's office in Austin, Texas. So I say to members opposite, when your Premier said this is our Alamo, with some delicious irony I think he was right. I think he was right. What is more, I think members opposite, with the

benefit of hindsight, many members opposite think this is our Alamo as well.

The Alamo is not treated in either Texan history or Mexican history as a Mexican victory or a Texas defeat. It is treated as a great Texas victory and the date from which most Texans count the founding of the state of Texas. Indeed it is . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — It's almost a shrine.

**Mr. Shillington:** — The member from Saskatoon says, it's almost a shrine. It is a shrine — it is a shrine.

So when the member from Rosthern says, hear, hear, he wants to vote on it, he might think about the Alamo, an utterly inconsequential fort in south-western Texas, and he might think about the lessons to be learned from that battle. The member from Rosthern might give some careful consideration to what happens to members and governments which use overwhelming numbers to achieve unpopular results. I just ask . . . when the member from Rosthern says, hear, hear, I just want the member from Rosthern to think about that particular battle which, as I say, has some lessons in it for you.

Mr. Speaker, I am . . . I want to summarize the comments that I made yesterday and I will be relatively brief in doing so.

**An Hon. Member:** — As always.

**Mr. Shillington:** — There is a good deal which — as always, says one member — there is a good deal which could be said on this subject. Regrettably, I have to be out of the House very briefly, and I am unable to do justice to this subject. So in a relatively brief period of time I'm going to have to take my seat.

I invite members opposite to (a) enter the debate, and hopefully they'll do so with more substance than the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, who said, in substance, he was glad to be here and proud to be here. And all I can say is we're glad he's glad and we're proud he's proud, but we really wish members opposite would contribute something to the debate besides such pointless drivel . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . If the member from Swift Current thinks this is a valuable subject and an important subject, then I invite the member from Swift . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. I would invite the hon. member to get onto the topic which he has only been on very peripherally, as I'm sure he realizes, and I ask him to get onto the motion under discussion.

**Mr. Shillington:** — I know that members opposite wait with breathless anticipation to hear my comments on the subject, so I will deal with the subject.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we oppose this for a number of reasons and I'm going to, as I say, going to summarize them and then take my seat. We oppose this because it is out of keeping with the traditions in this House. We think those traditions have served this Legislative Assembly very well and should be maintained.

Mr. Speaker, we are told by others who have researched the subject, there's no instance in Saskatchewan history, in the history of this legislature, where changes have been brought about unilaterally as is being done now.

We point out to members opposite that whatever happened, we don't know, but the initial suggestion which came from the Minister of Justice that it go to a committee was a sound one.

Nothing, Mr. Speaker, is written in stone. All things change. This is not an institution whose rules, whose customs are unchangeable. This is an institution which must grow with time, must change with changing habits and changing perceptions.

We recognize that the rules should be reviewed periodically and that there may be things that should be changed. Even with respect to bell-ringing . . . Before I take my seat I will repeat my defence of the tactic, but I say, even with respect to bell-ringing, it may be that there is a need to consider that.

It may be that there are other guarantees which could be given, Mr. Speaker. It may be that there are better ways of assuring an opposition that they won't be trampled under the heel of a government which suffers from too much enthusiasm.

So we say to members opposite, there may be a better way. The simple abolition of the rule is not a better way. But we say to members opposite, there may be a better way of accomplishing this. We're prepared to consider that. We're prepared to join with members opposite to review the operation of this House.

It has changed and will continue to change. Mr. Speaker, when I first came to this Legislative Assembly the House sat Friday afternoon. I just raise that as something that was abolished very early, and I think with good reason. Members have responsibilities not only in the Assembly but out of the Assembly. Members have the responsibility to go back to their ridings, to get in touch with their ridings, and to inform themselves . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — And some go back to their offices.

**Mr. Shillington:** — And the odd one gets back to their office now and then. I notice government benches are full. I notice government benches are full, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just mention that as a change that was brought about; there are any number of them. One of the most dramatic changes and most far-reaching changes was, in fact, the introduction of television. More than anything else, I think that has changed the manner in which this applies.

That was done, Mr. Speaker, through a committee. It was done through a committee which had all members on it, government and the opposition, and the roles, I might add, then were reversed, Mr. Speaker. There were some members of government that felt that that would improve the effectiveness of the opposition because the opposition is, in the nature of things, usually on the offensive; the government's usually on the defensive. It's

the nature of this as an institution.

Nevertheless, it was an all-party committee. Government members were eventually persuaded to try it. And I think most people would agree, it has greatly improved the effectiveness of this institution. Mr. Speaker, that would never have been accomplished had it not been for the tradition of all-party committees whose decisions are respected.

Mr. Speaker, so I say, and I make the point to members opposite, that the tradition of using all-party committees is a valuable one. It has served the opposition well and it has served the government well. It is a tradition which we should maintain.

I point out to members opposite that if you live by the sword, you may die by the sword. If you insist on moving in making unilateral changes to the rules, you should . . . That is a tradition with which members could be comfortable if they assume they're always going to be in office. If you assume that no election will ever change, then, Mr. Speaker, that's a tradition they could feel quite comfortable with because they'll always be in the driver's seat, and presumably their present mood is that they always know best, whatever the public sentiment might be.

But that of course is not the history of the province. The average term that a member serves in this Assembly is somewhere between five and six years; average term of a government is two terms; and all things change. Members opposite might consider what their position might be if they're not always in a majority. It should give members opposite some cause for hesitation with respect to this motion.

Mr. Speaker, we think that the tradition of this Assembly should be maintained, and we urge members opposite to find some face-saving way of avoiding what is a very serious mistake. I say to members opposite, in case they believe otherwise, that we're anxious to find a face-saving way whereby we can get on to other business. We think that this continued debate would not be as valuable and would not serve public interest as would a discussion of day care or agriculture.

**An Hon. Member:** — Or potash.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Well the member raises the potash. I say with respect to members opposite, you have no more of a mandate to privatize the potash industry . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. Order. The process of changing rules is certainly relevant. Any specifics outside of that are not relevant. There is a Bill on the order paper on public participation, which is Bill No. 1, and certainly it will be debated. There is Bill No. 20, which is the potash reorganization; that will certainly be debated at another time. But the debate now is on motion 33(1), the rule change.

**Mr. Shillington:** — That was probably a correct ruling, Mr. Speaker. The member from Qu'Appelle-Lumsden asked for my assistance with respect to the potash issue, and I just thought I would render my assistance and give



him what enlightenment I could. So it's perhaps an excess of compassion for the member from Qu'Appelle-Lumsden that drew me outside the strict bounds of this debate.

Mr. Speaker, in summary then, we think that this is the wrong way to approach a problem. We don't think it's the problem. We don't think that the bell-ringing has ever been misused in any real sense. And I will summarize my comments in that regard as well in due course. But we don't think it's a problem. We don't think there's any evidence of that, nor have members opposite given us any illustration of when it has been a problem. Apart from the member from "really glad" and "really proud", I haven't heard any comments which suggest that this has been an actual problem.

(1500)

We say that because the times when bell-ringing has been used, it has, in fact, Mr. Speaker, been used to ensure public opinion is respected by a government. And I don't think there's any exceptions to that. Every time the bells have been rung for a lengthy period of time, the government has violated public opinion. They have violated it in the sense that they have attempted to ignore it ... (inaudible interjection) ... The member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg wonders how they could have an opinion on a subject when they've never seen the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the SPC Bill was extensively discussed before it was introduced. I'm just assisting the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg — he asked me a question and I do my best to clear up their doubts. If I do, Mr. Speaker, they may vote for it. I thought that was the tradition here. So the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg asked for some assistance. I was lending it in spirit of good will and brotherhood, so I'll ...

**An Hon. Member:** — Ned, why don't you go to your meeting?

**Mr. Shillington:** — Ah well, indeed. The sparkling wit and charm of the member from Arm River is brought to bear. Where all was darkness, now there is light. We have the comments of the member from Arm River who wonders why I don't go to my meeting. The member from Arm River has no direct interest in my meeting, and I think therefore probably not any direct interest in the time at which I arrive at that meeting. However, as I say, we always appreciate the charming and stimulating comments of the member from Arm River.

Mr. Speaker, I will leave that alone since I took it from the Speaker's reaction to my comments to the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg that I was once again erring on the side of compassion for members opposite in attempting, as I was, to assist them with this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I said as well, and I want to emphasize this because it is really fundamental to this debate, that bell-ringing is very much in keeping with the tradition of parliament and very much in keeping with the function of a parliament.

The member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, in addition to

his other comments made from his seat, on his feet said he wanted to come back and debate the issue, and therefore the bell-ringing prevented him from coming back to debate the issue.

I made fun of his enthusiasm when he said how glad he was and how proud he was; perhaps I shouldn't. There's nothing wrong with enthusiasm for this institution, and one should never make light of someone who enjoys the work of this Assembly and looks forward to the work of this Assembly with anticipation. So I did so in a kindly fashion and not intending to be critical of him. Never be critical of a member who has enthusiasm for the work we're doing here.

What I want to point out to members opposite though, is that parliaments have traditionally been institutions which draw perimeters around which the executive works. Unlike the congressional form of government which is the U.S. system, members of this legislature are not part of government.

The member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg said he wanted to get back and debate the issue, treated this institution as if it was a debating society and the goal was to see who could provide the most sparkling and inspiring debate. This is not a debating society ... (inaudible interjection) ... It's generous of the member from Morse ...

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order, order, order. I'd ask members to allow the member for Regina Centre to make his comments.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, I was saying before the member from Morse commented on my popularity or lack thereof, that legislatures and parliaments serve a different function than a congressional form of government.

As is the case with our good neighbours to the South, and that is all ... (inaudible interjection) ... The member from Wilkie is concerned about the fact there's only two radicals here with me, as he styles them. I want to say to the member from Wilkie that I don't have to make a real effort to persuade the people on this side of the House. Most of them agree with me.

My comments are directed to members opposite who don't seem to have the same understanding of this issue. So I don't really need ...

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

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

**Mr. Muirhead:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The member for Regina Centre, all he's done since he's been speaking this afternoon is just making a speech commenting on comments from the colleagues over here. Is that anything to do with the bell-ringing? And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, please have him get back on the Bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. The point of order is not well taken. If members were not heckling the member that is speaking, he would have an opportunity to make

his comments and the Chair would certainly have an opportunity to make sure the comments were relevant to the issue before the House.

So I would ask members of the government benches to please keep their comments until they're on their feet and have an opportunity to speak, which they will have.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was pointing out in summary form that a parliament acts as a check on executive power. That's what a parliament is. I pointed out yesterday, and I will review it only in summary form. Parliaments came into being in that atmosphere.

Unlike the American experience, unlike the French experience, unlike the experience of almost all of the countries in the Americas which lie south of the Rio Grande, English parliament was not born out of a revolution — did not have its beginning in that experience.

It had its beginning in what at the time might have been a minor scuffle between King John and the nobles. They didn't, as they might have at the battle of Runnymede, they didn't dispose of him as they might have done. There were clear victories, there were clear victors, and the Royalists were clear losers. They might have disposed of him and set up an institution to govern. They didn't do that. They simply sought to impose some restrictions on how he operated. In those days the kings operated executive power.

That isn't the beginning of parliament as such, but it is perhaps the most important event in British history, because it was the beginning of a peaceful evolution towards a democratic government; it was the beginning of a limit on executive power.

Parliaments came into being actually 300 years later — came into being not to govern, as was the case in France after the revolution, or in the U.S. after the American revolution. They weren't sent there to make laws for the nation or to govern, they were sent as a check on executive power. They were to approve spending if appropriate, not approve it if not appropriate.

The Plantagenet kings of the era still made the laws; laws were all royal decrees. The kings — there were no queens during that particular era — raised the money; they set the taxes. Parliament met once a year to consider whether or not there ought to be some limit upon the king's power.

During a later period in time, during the Hanover kings and after the Tudor monarchy was finished, the monarchs of the era could not speak English — the early Hanover kings could not speak English. That occurred at the time of a constitutional crisis, the South Sea Bubble.

Power was then transferred to the cabinet, Sir Robert Walpole, but the parliament never did assume a function of governing. It was always, Mr. Speaker, always the function of parliament was always to set the limits and never to govern. And that was true not only before what is said to be the first prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, but was true afterwards.

Sir Robert Walpole set up a different system. The cabinet governed, but parliament never did. It's the unique feature — and it has remained true to this day — it's the unique feature of parliament, is that parliament does not sit to pass laws, as is the case whether one would be in North Dakota or Washington or Paris, France, or in Mexico City or in Buenos Aires. Parliament sits here and in England to call the government to account.

Mr. Speaker, the bell-ringing is very much within that tradition, very much within the tradition of providing some effective limits on the exercise of executive power — very much within the parliamentary tradition.

We were seeking nothing different in principle during the bell-ringing than the English nobility was seeking when dealing with King John. We seek not to replace them — that will occur, I think, in due course — but we seek to simply, with the bell-ringing, provide some effective check on their behaviour.

So I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that bell-ringing is very much within the tradition of this parliament. And it is a parliament in the sense of a small "p" parliament. It's very much within the tradition of this legislature, very much within the tradition of the Mother of Parliaments sitting in England.

When members opposite say they want to get back to debating or to governing, I think they misunderstand our system. We are not part of government. We have virtually no influence on what happens — recognize that fully; spent some years learning that. When I first came, I thought I was going to change the world for the better, both in government and opposition — find out that's not the role of a legislator. The role of legislator is something quite different. You in effect provide an effective check if there's any need to call the government to account.

So we say, Mr. Speaker, that the bell-ringing is very much within the tradition of parliament. It is what parliaments have always been about from the beginning. It was what they were about when they first began to meet during the Middle Ages. That continued to be the function of parliament after the transition of executive power from royalty to a prime minister and cabinet during the Hanoverian kings — remains true to this day.

Members opposite behave as if this were some sort of an illegitimate tactic. We think it is very legitimate. It is true that if it were done in Washington or Paris, to use the two outstanding examples of congressional government, it would be different. But one should never confuse a parliament with a congressional form of government. They are very, very different. They operate differently. It has some strengths and weaknesses, but it's ours.

Mr. Speaker, for all I know there may be bell-ringing in Washington and France . . . in Paris, too, but I . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Member from Saskatoon says it needs to be researched. I'm not in a position to do that on my feet, but indeed, perhaps it should be researched. Mr. Speaker, I want to summarize what were our goals in ringing the bells. Mr. Speaker, I want to deal . . . I want to summarize that relatively briefly.

We sought in ringing the bells to, in part, to dramatize the issue. We thought the issue of absolute, fundamental importance. We live in a different environment than we did in the '70s. This has been a period of . . . I think historians will treat these last 15 years as a period of very rapid change in this country.

During that period of time, at least two things changed. One was that the constitution . . . The government of Pierre Trudeau returned the constitution, a goal which I think everyone shared, and in so doing, inserted something that is not within the British tradition or had not been within the Canadian tradition — that was a charter of rights. He did so, I think, with the broad support of the Canadian public, who felt it a good thing. But we now have a charter of rights.

(1515)

It is not to me self-evident that we could do in the '90s what we did in the '70s.

I suspect if we attempted to, there would be some constitutional challenges to it. One can challenge virtually any action of a government on constitutional grounds. The courts have taken a very active role, Mr. Speaker, in challenging government. That was not true before the introduction of what it is, in name, the Canada Act, but in fact Canadians call their charter of rights.

That was not true in the '70s. Courts very rarely challenged what government did. They were thought to be separate, watertight compartments. This government has learned that — and I won't get into the issue of the Rafferty dam — but this government has learned how very active courts are in challenging governments.

It is not self-evident to members of this side of the Assembly that we could simply take over, to decide we're going to take over two-thirds of the potash industry and do it, Mr. Speaker. So we felt that the issue which we're dealing with was of the absolute, utmost importance. That, combined with the free trade Act, may mean that these actions which the government was taking were irrevocable. We felt they were fundamental . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. I don't see how that relates to the bell-ringing issue. I would ask the member to keep his comments on the motion that's before the Assembly.

I have asked the member this many times. I've allowed a lot of latitude, and of course I have quoted rule 25(2) from the members' handbook and what parameters the Speaker has to deal with this. So I would encourage the member to certainly get back to the issue. You're bringing other specific issues into the debate that I don't believe are relevant, and with that I just warn the member once more.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is conceivable that I was canvassing the subject with some degree of thoroughness. I was simply pointing out that we rang the bells. Our motive in so doing was to bring to the attention of the public what was being done. In that regard, we felt

that to be of, as I said, the most fundamental importance. This was not a trifling issue.

In that regard, the bell-ringing was very effective. I was genuinely surprised that there was so much public support for the bell-ringing. I was genuinely surprised. I never would have thought that only 22 per cent would oppose it and 67 per cent would say, yes, we support the bell-ringing. I was genuinely surprised at that. I would never have believed that to be possible.

And during that period of time, I gave some thought to why there was such public support for bell-ringing. If members opposite haven't gone through this same thought process, then I hope you keep your veterinarian practice alive, or whatever it is, because you're not going to be in this Assembly long if you don't give this matter some thought.

This is the most dramatic event. If I was asked — school kids often come and ask you what's the most important thing you did, and so on — if I was asked to name the most dramatic event that I think I've been through, I think it might well be the events of this spring. Members might well give themselves . . . so members should give this some thought. This was a unique and a very different experience, certainly from my vantage point it was.

We didn't go out with the intention of staying out for 17 days. We didn't go out with the intention of staying out for half an hour. We will know, Mr. Speaker, that votes on first reading are relatively rare — a recorded vote on first reading is relatively rare. I don't think that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I shall respond to that in a moment. The member, and I don't know the identity of the person, but the member said we got lucky. I'll deal with that in a moment.

Mr. Speaker, we went out; we found a great deal of support. Almost from the moment we went out to vote, the telephones started to ring, Mr. Speaker; the public started to phone and say, right on, keep it up. From the very beginning we had a good deal of public support.

Members say we got lucky. I don't think it was luck at all. We were opposed to the Bill. We decided to voice our opposition in the most dramatic possible fashion, and our judgement turned out to be accurate. The public were opposed to it. Our dramatic opposition to it in fact galvanized the public opinion.

It is a fact, Mr. Speaker, that after ringing the bells for 17 days we had a higher level of public support when we came back than when we went.

Why did the public react so calmly to bell-ringing? I think because they appreciated having the matter brought to their attention. They did not object to it because it involved them.

If we'd have sat, Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly for 17 days — not in the Assembly, but sat in the building for 17 days — that might have been different. But we had a second goal besides dramatizing it. The 17-day walk-out gave us an opportunity to communicate with the public, and we did so with as much energy as we could muster.

And there's a lesson in this for members opposite. You don't persuade public opinion with massive advertising budgets. A little bit of advertising is a useful thing, but there are rapidly diminishing points of return. A few radio ads are useful. A massive amount of radio ads are counterproductive. We didn't do it, in part, perhaps, because we didn't have the money. We did a very modest bit of radio advertising.

We worked as hard as we could to organize rallies on very short notice. We sent out letters to select people whom we know to be activists and interested, all of which cost us and the taxpayer very, very little. A lot of shoe leather, a lot of energy. We criss-crossed this province back and forth in a fashion which could only be described as hectic. But in doing so, everybody in Saskatchewan knew what we were saying. Everybody understood our position.

Mr. Speaker, by the end of that 17-day walk-out, only 11 per cent of people were undecided — very, very low. This is by the poll. I think there's 11 per cent of the people can't hear properly when they pick up the phone. I mean, to have 11 per cent who say they're undecided, I don't know, is a very low percentage.

So, Mr. Speaker, we used the 17-day period to communicate with the public. We did so effectively, and to that extent it shouldn't be decried. The public thought the 17-day walk-out to be a useful exercise. They appreciated, I think, the effort we put into it to communicate. They turned out in massive numbers to the rallies. Members opposite didn't go out, then or now. They sent out bureaucrats, and I don't mean to use the word bureaucrats in a pejorative way, but they didn't go out themselves and face the fire; they sent others out, and people just didn't come. But you the only people came to the meetings organized by members opposite were people who were opposed to it.

You might ask . . . I think members opposite might give some pause to . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. The member is getting back into specifics. The question before the Assembly is the change to the rules and the limiting of the bells, and that is rule 33(1). The member is straying away again from the issue before the Assembly and getting into specifics, so I would ask the member again. The process of changing rules or the rule change is certainly relevant; specific issues are not.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, I was simply attempting to point out, and I think it is relevant to the debate and I may not have been making the point with any clarity, but I was simply attempting to point out that the use of the bells for 17 days enjoyed broad public support. I was attempting to make the point that that wasn't because they misunderstood the issue or the bell-ringing, it was because the bell-ringing served a useful purpose. I was simply trying to make the point that when they abolish this, they're abolishing something the public found useful — something we made good use of, that's true, but something the public also made good use of.

Mr. Speaker, it is true that the bell-ringing . . . I think it's true, in the history of this country, it has not been misused. I think that's accurate. It could not be called a misuse of the bell-ringing when in fact the purpose of it was to communicate our views to the public.

In summary, that's what I was saying was that the purpose was to communicate; was (a) to stop the government, but (b), more important, to communicate our position to the government.

We never went out with the view that we were never coming back until the government said "uncle." That, I think, would have been misuse of the tactic. We went out with the view that something dramatic was needed, (a) to bring this government to its senses, but (b) to bring the matter squarely, put the matter squarely before the public — that's the use that was made.

Mr. Speaker, I say to members opposite that is a legitimate use of a tactic. And that is why I think the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That is why . . . That could not be commented on by me, could it? I could comment on it, but I don't know that Mr. Deputy Speaker will let that proceed for long.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite might give some cause to consider, and I said this earlier, members opposite might give some cause to consider why our support from the public was higher after we did it than it was before. We think it was because the tactic wasn't misused. The tactic was used to communicate with the public. It was used to bring our views to the public and to give them a chance to communicate with us — done with great effectiveness.

I say in a somewhat peripheral way, if this government attempted to do the same, rather than the massive advertising program, or sending out bureaucrats, or a commission whose credibility, with every respect to Lloyd Barber, a commission whose credibility was destroyed by the Premier as he set it up — I think the terms of reference destroyed the credibility of that commission — if members opposite communicated with the public on the issue, as distinct from asking advertisers to do your job for you, I think members opposite would come to the conclusion we were right about SPC, and therefore . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. The question is not the specifics of why you went out of the House. The question here is the issue of the proper use of the bells and the rule before the House.

Order, order. Order. I have allowed a lot of latitude, like I've said before, and I certainly have called the member to order many times, and quoted. And I can quote again, if he wishes, rule 22(2) out of the members' handbook. But I'm warning the member once more that if he does not stick to the issue before the Assembly, that the Chair certainly can call for the next speaker.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, in making . . . in abolishing the ringing of the bells we think the government is seeking to blunt the effect of public opinion.

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

(1530)

**Mr. Shillington:** — For after all, Mr. Speaker, the ringing of the bells was a vehicle through which public opinion was brought to bear on the issue of the day.

Members opposite will deny that. Members opposite are of the view because they were elected with a majority of seats — not a majority of votes, that should be kept in mind, the members opposite as well; they were elected with a majority of seats — anything they do therefore represents the popular will. There's obviously, Mr. Speaker, a degree of arrogance in that view. There's obviously a degree of arrogance.

That is a hazard of a government being in office too long. We think the bells . . . We think the ringing of the bells brought public opinion to bear squarely on the issue. It didn't cause the government to back off, I regret to say. I regret to say the government didn't say. Maybe our judgement on this issue wasn't perfect; maybe we ought not to have done it. It instead simply caused them to try to reach the same goal through a different route.

And Mr. Speaker, we say that this tactic should remain. We say that this tactic of bell-ringing should be available to the opposition. We think there's no evidence, Mr. Speaker, that it was misused.

**An Hon. Member:** — No evidence of misuse?

**Mr. Shillington:** — No. Member from Melfort says, with a note of surprise in his voice, no element of misuse.

I think, Mr. Speaker, if one examines the issues when the bell has been rung, one will find that to be true. It has been used to thwart and stop a government in office, and it's been used to limit executive power, but each time bell-ringing has been used, it has been used to give effect to popular will. I think that's true.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, the instances of bell-ringing longer than six hours are as follows. I don't know what's going on in Ontario at the moment, to be perfectly honest. I understand the bells are ringing there, and I'm told that they have now perhaps been shut off, I don't know. So maybe that's been resolved. So I leave that outside the discussion because I'm not familiar with the issues.

I am familiar with the first time the bell-ringing was used. It was used in Ottawa by the Conservative opposition who took umbrage because the Trudeau government of the day sought to limit their effectiveness as an opposition by including a Bill they opposed, a Bill which in effect established the national energy program, together with some unrelated legislation. They took umbrage at that. The public supported them. After 11 days the Trudeau government wisely backed down and thought better of it.

One could not call that to be a misuse of bells, when the ringing of the bells was intended to . . . gave effect to public opinion, made public opinion effective.

It was used, Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba, again by a

Conservative opposition who opposed the Pawley government's attempts to provide a degree of bilingualism in Manitoba in what many felt was quite an unrealistic decision. The Supreme Court of Canada mandated the Manitoba government to bring in bilingual statutes. I may well support the Pawley government, but I wouldn't argue for a moment that the Conservatives didn't have solid public support.

**An Hon. Member:** — We've heard all this.

**Mr. Shillington:** — The members opposite say that they have heard it. There's nothing in the comments of members opposite to suggest you understood it. You may have heard it, but there's nothing to illustrate that you ever understood it.

Mr. Speaker, the other time it was used dramatically illustrates why we need bell-ringing. The only other time it was used in this province illustrates very dramatically why bell-ringing may still serve a useful purpose.

I said, Mr. Speaker, that laying at the bottom of this is a lack of trust between the two parties in this legislature. That's what underpins this issue and underpins the problems that we've had in this session. I know that Mr. Deputy Speaker wouldn't me to get into that, but the member from . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. It's very difficult for the Chair to hear the member speaking when there's discussions going across the floor between both sides of the House.

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, underlying this debate is a lack of trust, a lack of confidence of us in them. We simply don't trust the government to be fair; we don't trust them to play by the rules. And that underpins our whole opposition to this bell-ringing.

That is illustrated by the last use that was made of this. I won't get into this in detail because I did so earlier in my speech. Suffice it to say, suffice it to summarize briefly, I made a comment in this legislature. I was sued by a person, Mark Silver, of Silver Developments (Ltd.). We raised it as a point of personal privilege in the Assembly. The then Speaker found a *prima facie* case that that was accurate. What happened? There are many ways that the Government House Leader of the day, the member from Lumsden, could have dealt with it. He chose to deal with it, however, by in effect giving those who were suing me full rein.

Mr. Speaker, that incident illustrates why bell-ringing still serves a purpose. Members of this side of the Assembly can't function if we're going to be sued. We will often, as is the nature of oppositions, raise issues of undue influence. Such comments are usually a ground for libel. We simply cannot do our job if we're going to be subject to libel actions.

What the government did in that instance, five years ago, was an attempt to open up members of the opposition to a libel action. We rang the bells. The public, once again, Mr. Speaker, agreed with us, and after four days the member from Lumsden did what he should have done in the very beginning — asked the solicitor to withdraw the

action, and they did. That illustrates why bell-ringing still serves a purpose, at least as long as you have a government of this ilk in office.

Mr. Speaker, there isn't any evidence that this government respects the traditions of this House. There isn't any evidence that this government respects the way that this House has functioned. There isn't any evidence that this government in fact understands how this place functions.

Mr. Speaker, we have . . . the last decade has been a tumultuous one in Saskatchewan politics. The turnover in members has been extremely high, much higher than has normally been the case. It has meant that there are few people on the opposition benches who actually ever served . . . I'm sorry, there are few people in the government benches who served on the opposition — three or four, I think, is all there are left. It may therefore make it difficult for members opposite to understand why the bell-ringing is on occasion a legitimate tactic.

So I say to members opposite, I've said before, put yourself in the opposition. Because if you're successful, if you get back to your constituency, if you prove to be a good listener, you may survive the defeat of this government. And all governments are defeated. You may be in opposition. That's when this as a safety may well be useful to you.

Some of you are never going to see opposition. I will not pick out names, but the average term of office is about five years. About one-quarter to one-third of you who are elected for the first time will get re-elected. So most of you will not see the opposition, statistically speaking. But some of you will, and you should think about your role in opposition . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm not counting out the member from Rosthern or anyone else. I am simply saying that, statistically, most of you will not see the opposition. You won't survive that long unless things change.

Politics is probably getting more tumultuous, not less. So think about what you need and what protections you're going to want when you're in opposition.

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

**Mr. McLaren:** — I would like to ask for leave, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to introduce some guests.

Leave granted.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. McLaren:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you, and through you to all members in the Assembly, some students from my constituency of Yorkton. They are 46 students, grade 4, from the Dr. Brass School, and they're seated, of course, in your gallery, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It's a real pleasure to have you at our Assembly this afternoon. We trust you'll enjoy the proceedings of the Assembly. We are debating, at the present time, motion no. 33.

And these students are accompanied by two of their teachers, Jo Ann Zandee and Marilyn Pearson; and chaperons, Tracy Kwasniowski, Shirley Guest, and Debbie McDowell and Laura Chaban — am I pronouncing that name correctly? I hope I am.

We hope you enjoy the proceedings. Have a good visit to Regina. Have good summer holidays, and we wish you all the success in your exams. And I will meet with you a little bit later to have pictures taken and to have some refreshments, and hopefully I can answer some of your questions as to what you've seen here this afternoon.

So with that, I'm asking all members to please join me in welcoming the students from Dr. Brass in Yorkton.

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

### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### MOTIONS

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

**Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm near the end of my remarks. I want to just address a comment to the schoolchildren who are in the gallery. In 1962 when I was a little older, I think, than most of those kids would be, we caught a train. We lived on a farm, caught a train into — that's another bit of nostalgia they'll never see — caught a train in and came in, came to the legislature. Happened to arrive as the medicare debate was being — I'll be quick — happened to arrive as medicare was being debated and a filibuster was in progress.

The then premier met us; didn't take advantage of it to tell his side of the story; simply said that the legislature was doing what the legislature should do, and that is examining the government actions and holding the government to account.

That was my first experience, Mr. Speaker, with the Assembly. It made an indelible impression on me, not only with the Assembly but with the man himself. In the midst of that emotional debate, he took no opportunity to take advantage of it, simply stated what I've been trying to say and what I say to the children, and that is that we are taking the position that in this bell-ringing debate we are attempting to preserve the right of the legislature to hold the government to account.

We seek to preserve this as a safety valve for members, so that members' rights will not be trampled, as they have been in the past, undeniably — as undeniably, Mr. Speaker, in the scheme of things, will happen in the future. It is not all evil that's behind us. It will happen again, just as surely as someone's rights were trampled in the past, as I think mine clearly were in 1985, so — in 1985, yes — so someone will be again. One of you will be in the position I was in.

(1545)

Think about it. I ask members opposite to think about it

when you're there. Think about the use that has been made of this bell-ringing tactic . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'd dearly like to respond to that comment, but I'll do the member from Melville a favour and overlook it. And I am doing the member from Melville a considerable favour when I overlook that comment he just made.

Mr. Speaker, I ask members opposite to think about not the immediate issue. In the scheme of things, that is probably not as important as the way this place functions. It has functioned very, very well. We look across the Pacific Ocean, see the world's largest nation in turmoil, on the brink of civil war — have every reason to be thankful for these institutions. They have served us very, very, well. The vast majority of nations on earth and the vast majority of people do not have access to them.

Before we change them dramatically, we should think about it. We should consider that together, as civilized people, and consider that in a civilized way, not in this tug of war which shows no sign of coming to a conclusion. But in the fashion in which we've always done, we should send it to a committee where, as civilized men and women, we can consider the matter, and, as I think those committees have done, determine not only what is in our personal best interests but what is in the best interests of this institution and the public of Saskatchewan.

With those words, Mr. Speaker, I implore members opposite to adopt a more reasonable approach to this issue and either withdraw it or vote against it. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Gleim:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to speak to this motion proposed by the Minister of Justice, the member from Kindersley. I believe this is a very important motion. It is so important that we have to deal with this motion and deal with it right here in this House.

The way not to deal with this motion is by hijacking this legislature, and I mean by hijacking, I mean 17 days — 17 days of bell-ringing. This is not the democratic way with dealing with legislature. This is not the reason that people sent us here to this legislature. The reason they sent us here to this legislature is to deal with it in this Assembly, and I strongly believe the people out there have got that message.

Mr. Speaker, I was out and I was talking to many, many people in my constituency. I talked to lots of R.M.s and talked to lots of towns that people that sit on those as councillors, aldermen, or whatever you want to call them. They asked me what all this bell-ringing was all about, and why they were ringing the bells. The first thing I said, I wasn't quite sure why they were ringing the bells, because I'm not so darn sure that they even knew why they were ringing the bells. They walked out of here. I'm not so sure that they knew how long they were going to be out until some of the people across the way got to some of the other people across the . . . maybe their seat mates, and maybe said, we'll test them.

And I think this is the wrong way to test the Assembly,

especially when there is many, many people out there that are waiting for some of the Bills to be passed in this House, some of the Bills that are on the agenda. We will turn to those Bills and the question that was put to me: how long is this going to last?

Well the same thing as the member just said from Saskatoon South, and he said this the other day — we will be here for a long time. The member from Regina Centre said, we don't trust.

Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to be here for a long time because we are the government and we will stay here as long as it takes to do what the people want us to do.

And talking about trust, good faith, and behaviour, you talk about behaviour — that is not behaviour over there.

As I was saying when I was talking to R.M.s and to towns, I said, put yourself in this place. If you have six councillors and two of them walk out and you can't pass any motions or any by-laws or anything, what position would you be in? They said, we wouldn't let it happen; that's not democracy. I would like to tell you what it really is, but I don't think this is the place to do it.

Anybody that's been in business — I don't know how many of you people across the way have been in business, but it's probably a very few — but anybody who's in business wouldn't do their business the way we're doing it, the way it has happened in here. They would stay in here and they would sit down and they would negotiate, and when it was done, whether you were for it or against it, you went along with it.

The opposition has made statements, along with Barb Byers, they we're going to make this province ungovernable. I repeat, Mr. Speaker, unworkable. That was the House Leader, along with Barb Byers.

**An Hon. Member:** — Who's Barb Byers?

**Mr. Gleim:** — I think everybody knows who Barb Byers is. And that is why we need to change this rule. They travelled the province telling the people of this province what is not in the Bill, the SaskEnergy Bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. I've brought members of the opposition to order because of getting into specifics. The Bill has nothing to do with the debate before the House. The debate before the House is rule 33(1) and the process of changing rules. Specifics outside of that are not debatable under this motion.

**Mr. Gleim:** — I have to apologize, Mr. Speaker. You do know how to run a business, as I was talking before, and that's the way to run a business.

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

**Mr. Gleim:** — As I was saying before, as I was travelling the province — and I did travel the province a little bit on the weekends out of my constituency — but in my constituency alone I had many, many phone calls. Not phone calls saying, what are you doing in the House; they

were phone calls where: how much longer are you going to be there? And I said, well, that is actually up to the opposition; it is up to the opposition how long we're going to be here. If the opposition want to co-operate, I guess we won't be here too long, but if they don't co-operate, who knows.

And I guess that is why it's so important that we have this motion and we think about this motion and we pass this motion, because if we don't, what is stopping you people from across the way from walking out and never coming back? which some day you probably won't have to bother coming back.

I guess it shows the opposition leader, the member from Riversdale, really has no control over — I guess I should say like the article in the *Star-Phoenix* last week — over his radicals. Those radicals over there still believe they are government. The people of this province, in 1982 and 1986, sent those people over there a message. That's why they're sitting over there. We are the government. We set the agenda.

**An Hon. Member:** — That doesn't give you the right to be a dictator.

**Mr. Gleim:** — I would like to . . . Mr. Speaker, I guess with that kind of control over his caucus, the opposition leader across the way has his problems. I'm glad they're his problems. He has to deal with them, and I'm not so sure that he's dealing with them.

I believe the opposition want to get their views across to the people. If the opposition really want to get their views across to the people by ringing the bells for 17 days — yes, Mr. Speaker, they did ring them for 17 days — they should take their beach-balls, their play toys or whatever they got, go on home and do the honourable thing and resign, Mr. Speaker. Resign, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Gleim:** — They're calling for the members over here to resign. This is the government that's trying to set the agenda. They don't want us to set the agenda; they don't want to co-operate. So I think you should do the honourable thing, Mr. Speaker.

The people of this province, Mr. Speaker, will not forget the opposition. They will never forgive you. They'll never forgive you just over this Bill, just because this Bill does mean that you can run a House the way it should be run.

But I think, as you all know, that all across Canada there is many, many provinces . . . there's only two provinces that aren't under this same . . . have this same legislation. And as one of the members mentioned this morning, there was a debate went on in 1956; I think it was a pipeline Bill. They debated that; they brought in a rule, said you have to get on with government orders, get on with doing what you are here for to do. Maybe that is the way to go.

Mr. Speaker, they talk . . . Just one little thing I'd like to mention. Maybe I'm not supposed to say this, but I heard the opposition members say that the energy Bill has been withdrawn. The energy Bill has not been withdrawn; it

has been stood. I'd like to just make that clear and go on record, Mr. Speaker.

The people of this province want to have a look at this Bill. They have the time to look at. They have the time until October to look at this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and I think you have to give this government credit for that.

I heard the member from Regina Centre make a remark yesterday about doing some shopping in the Cornwall Centre while he was out on his 17-day break. And he was standing in the Cornwall Centre talking with some people, and he mentioned the young PCYF (Progressive Conservative Youth Federation) group, that is, the young Conservatives, and how the people around him chased those people out of the Cornwall Centre. I talked to those young people, Mr. Speaker. They weren't chased out of the Cornwall Centre. It was the man from Regina Centre that left them. They were still standing there when he walked away.

**An Hon. Member:** — What's his name?

**Mr. Gleim:** — I can't repeat his name. It was the member from the Cornwall Centre. They started at a debate and they couldn't finish the debate because he wasn't there. He wasn't there. He disappeared.

I think it's time that we got on with business in this House. Business as it has been, and I want you members from the opposition across the way to think very strongly about this. Think about what it can do. You have always mentioned, some day you're going to be sitting over here. Well that's hard to believe that you will be sitting here with the way you're thinking right now, because I don't think the people are going to allow you to sit over here. And if you want to have a debate with the people, you wait — we will call an election, then you can debate the Bill. You can debate whichever you want at that time, and I think the people will make that decision.

I think the time has come that we have to be very serious. We have to get serious. That's why the people sent us. I will be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Kindersley, the Minister of Justice, and I urge all members on this side and on the other side — the opposition — to do the same. That you very much.

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

(1600)

**Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Shaunavon for taking part in this debate as one of the few government members who have seen fit to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . one of the few, I said, one of the few who have seen fit to stand and attempt a defence of this motion that this government has put before the House.

So I want to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . the member for Assiniboia, or happy and glad, or happy and proud, also for taking some initiative anyway to attempt to defend, although I've noted, Mr. Speaker, that their attempts to defend this motion have been very short and with very little substance, I might add.



And, Mr. Speaker, I note that many of the questions proposed by members on this side of the House regarding this motion and its motives and its process are not being addressed when members opposite do get up to speak. Therefore it would say to me that the points being made by members on this side of the House are well taken, and the government members opposite have no defence on those points.

Mr. Speaker, in the course of my remarks in this debate I hope to consider a variety of areas. I want to take some time to look at the situation that has brought us to this day, to this debate, to this point.

I want to take some time in looking at that argument that's been advanced by government members, and again we heard it advanced by the member for Shaunavon, that somehow the ringing of the bells in this case, which brought forward this motion, is somehow undemocratic. I want to look at that argument of theirs. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that that argument is in my view hypocritical for them to advance, and secondly, it's wrong.

I want to look also at why, in my judgement, the bell-ringing provision that has existed, and I hope will continue to exist in this legislature, is indeed a means for the flourishing of democracy. I want to spend some time on that. I want to spend some time, Mr. Speaker, in my remarks, describing why in my view this particular motion is totally inappropriate, totally inappropriate for five good reasons. I want to spend time on that.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to spend time on describing what in my view would be an appropriate way for this House to go in dealing with this situation, a way that I think all reasonable members could agree with it.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's a Chinese proverb — either a blessing, or is it a curse? I believe it is the Chinese who say, may you live in interesting times. Well there's no question, anyone who has observed proceedings in this House in the course of this spring — and you, sir, are in the best position to do that — must say that we have seen, at best, interesting times in this House, made interesting by a series, a whole series, of unprecedented events.

Clearly 17 days of bell-ringing in this province is unprecedented — clearly. Also unprecedented, Mr. Speaker, in my view, is the event which brought on that bell-ringing, the introduction of legislation in this House to privatize SaskPower — unprecedented simply because of the unprecedented nature of the betrayal of a commitment. Mr. Speaker, that was obviously an unprecedented betrayal of a commitment that brought on the bell-ringing, which has brought on the motion which we now debate.

We have seen, in the course of this spring session, the unprecedented attack of a government minister on the Provincial Auditor. And now we have an unprecedented motion which is being followed up with an unprecedented debate. Mr. Speaker, anyone following events in this House would agree that these have been interesting times.

The motion that we are debating, number 14 on the order paper, a motion to amend rule 33(1) of the functioning of this Legislative Assembly, a motion that would amend the rules and procedures that govern us all in this House — this motion seeks to limit bell-ringing in Saskatchewan legislature to a period of one hour — no more than one hour.

Now what is unprecedented in my view, Mr. Speaker, about this motion which we debate, what makes this motion totally unprecedented in the history of this legislature . . . I wish the Minister of Highways would pay more attention to the speaker and less to the students. Mr. Speaker, I realize . . .

Mr. Speaker, I argue that this motion is unprecedented for two reasons. One is that we are here dealing with a change in the rules of the functioning of this legislature. Never before in the history of this legislature has a rule change been introduced in this fashion. Never before in the history of the Saskatchewan legislature has a majority government sought to change the rules unilaterally. To my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, that has never happened before in the Saskatchewan legislature, particularly with a rule change of this degree.

What we have, Mr. Speaker . . . the unprecedented situation that we have here is that a government has come into this House, with a majority, with the wish to ram a rule change through without consultation or conversation or negotiation with members of the opposition. Mr. Speaker, in my view that's plain wrong and entirely unprecedented.

But this rule change, Mr. Speaker, or this proposed rule change is unprecedented on another front because, in my view, this is the first rule change that has been proposed in this legislature for purely political reasons — for purely partisan political reasons.

Mr. Speaker, on other occasions when the rules have been changed in this legislature, as from time to time they will, and must and should be changed, the goal of that change has always been to strengthen the institution; to make the functioning of the Saskatchewan legislature more appropriate to the needs of the day; to make it possible for all members to contribute to the work of this legislature and therefore to contribute to the province; to strengthen both roles, both the role of the opposition and the role of the government.

In every other incident or rule change in this legislature, the motive has been to improve this legislature and to improve its functioning and to improve the role of both government and opposition. In this case, Mr. Speaker, we have the unprecedented situation of a rule change introduced unilaterally by a majority government with a partisan political motive, a partisan political motive that has no precedent in Saskatchewan legislative history.

**An Hon. Member:** — Why would they do that?

**Mr. Calvert:** — Why are they doing that, Mr. Speaker? To achieve a goal they could not otherwise achieve, and that's to force through the privatization of SaskPower. It's obvious to everyone in Saskatchewan that what this rule

change is, is a back door route to force the privatization of SaskPower on the people of Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, in my view that's totally inappropriate, and therefore I describe this proposed rule change as it exists today on the blues, on the order paper, as unprecedented — unprecedented because here for the very first time in the history of the Saskatchewan legislature we have a majority government attempting to impose a rule change on all members without the very traditional meeting of members, negotiating between members, the all-party committee that can join together to forge that rule.

Now in this case we have a unilateral move on behalf of a majority government attempting to ram this rule through. That's unprecedented. And secondly, it's unprecedented because the motive in this case is not for the betterment of the legislature, not for the betterment of the democratic process in this institution, but for partisan political purposes; a rule change with a partisan political goal, that goal being to force through the privatization of SaskPower which the people of this province have so firmly rejected, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to look at that situation which has brought us to this debate. This debate essentially began on that day when the government sought to introduce first reading of its Bill to privatize SaskPower, to sell off the natural gas division of SaskPower. That's where this debate really began.

And you recall, Mr. Speaker, you recall that in the last election, the people of Saskatchewan were given every assurance by every member running for that Progressive Conservative Party, given the solemn promise of the Premier of the province, that we would never, never, he said, privatize the utilities.

Well on the day that this debate began, the debate that leads us to this day and this motion, on the day that this debate began, that commitment was broken. We saw a Premier and a Deputy Premier making commitments a year ago in this House. When the Premier was asked by my colleague from Rosemont, is the formation of SaskEnergy the first step to privatization, the Deputy Premier said no. Well the day that that legislation was introduced, or they sought to introduce it in this House, it was a betrayal of that commitment and that promise.

Mr. Speaker, as you well know, on that morning the bells in this legislature began to ring. They rang that morning; they rang that weekend. And in the course of that weekend, we left this building and we talked to people in our own constituency; we consulted with peoples in other constituencies. We travelled the province that weekend. We received the phone calls here at the caucus office, here in our own constituency offices, and we determined that the public support for our stand was growing.

We determined also that the public wanted a voice in this debate. They wanted their voice to be heard in this legislature. To give them that opportunity, the

opportunity that should belong to the people of Saskatchewan, the opportunity to voice their opinion and to have it heard by government, the bells of this legislature put on hold the functioning of this legislature for some 17 days — I think 11 sitting days, Mr. Speaker — a total of 17 days, about two weeks. For about two weeks, the functioning of this legislature was put on hold.

What happened in that two weeks? Well, the people of Saskatchewan were given an opportunity to speak on this issue, on the issue of the privatization of SaskPower, and speak they did. Mr. Speaker, it's not entirely germane to this debate, but you and I and everyone in Saskatchewan know the public opinion that was expressed during that 17 days when only 22 per cent of the people of Saskatchewan supported the government — no to the privatization of SaskPower. Twenty-two per cent only were supporting the government. That was the public opinion voiced in the 17 days that the bells rang.

It was obvious then that the people had spoken, obvious that the people had spoken, obvious that the vast majority of Saskatchewan people wanted this government to stop its foolishness in the privatization of SaskPower.

We returned to this House with that public opinion. Mr. Speaker, we came back to this legislature not only with the public opinion polls in place, we came back armed with petitions taken from across this province — tens of thousands of names. We've presented almost a hundred thousand names in this House already.

Mr. Speaker, in that 17 days the people of Saskatchewan expressed their opinion. They said what they wanted to be heard by the government. They said, save SaskPower. And they knew full well, they knew full well what this government was about. It was about the privatization of SaskPower. They can call it what they want. The people of Saskatchewan understand what it was about: the privatization of SaskPower. And they expressed their opinion, Mr. Speaker. They expressed their opinion in that two weeks that the function of this legislature was silenced.

Now did the government listen, and did the government listen to that outpouring of public opinion that the ringing of the bells provided? Did . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the Minister of Commercial Affairs, from his seat, wants to know what my parishioners think about this. Well, like the rest of the people of Saskatchewan, those people that I'm acquainted with of the church, a good 80 per cent of them oppose what your government is doing. You won't listen to them either. It doesn't matter where you go.

(1615)

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan were given an opportunity to speak. They took that opportunity and they spoke with a clear voice. They said to us, stop this government. They've said to this government, stop your foolishness. But did the government listen, Mr. Speaker? Did the government listen? Well now they've put it off — fair enough, they've put off this privatization. They've established a road show to travel the province and try and sell the idea, but it's not working. It's not working.

So we returned. Then what happened, Mr. Speaker? Then what happened? Well obviously this government had been burnt by the experience, and obviously they never want to see it happen again. Obviously they do not want the people of Saskatchewan to voice their opinions. They don't really want the people of Saskatchewan to have an opinion, for that matter, other than the opinion that they hold.

So what is the first thing that we get handed to us coming into this legislature? A motion to stop bell-ringing. What for, Mr. Speaker? So that they can bring back, so that at some future date they can bring back their political agenda, which is to sell SaskPower and to ram it through. They did not listen, Mr. Speaker; they did not listen to the public opinion that was expressed in that 17-day period. And that saddens me. It saddens me when any government has grown so out of touch and so arrogant that they will no longer listen to the people they were elected to govern.

So we have this unprecedented motion, unprecedented in that we have a majority government attempting to ram through a rule change affecting the rules of this legislature and the functioning of all members, an unprecedented motion that has as its goal the eventual privatization of SaskPower.

Mr. Speaker, I and members on this side of the House are not the only ones who hold this view. We can summarize the course of events with comments from political columnists in our province. *Leader-Post*, May 31, Wednesday, May 31, a noted political columnist in our province describes this course of events in a few short sentences, when he writes:

Next was the Tories' ill-fated SaskEnergy privatization. What was to be a bold move, giving them unstoppable momentum on the privatization issue, turned into a political nightmare.

It has disrupted the Tories' entire timetable and undermined their credibility on privatization. At the same time, it has forced the government to radically change its legislative plans, delaying legislation indefinitely (now, Mr. Speaker, get this), while seeking to impose limits on the opposition's ability . . .

Mr. Speaker, that's what's happened here, that's what's happened here.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we come to one of the more peculiar turn of events in this entire scenario. We returned to this House after providing the opportunity for the people of Saskatchewan to express their view, as they did. We returned to this House ready to do government business, to debate the budget, to do the estimates, to debate important legislation which the people of Saskatchewan are waiting for. First thing we're given is a motion, a proposal to change the rules.

Then, I guess, realizing that the public of Saskatchewan could see the arrogance of what they were doing, the

Minister of Justice seemed to have a little change of heart. He seemed, at one point, willing to retreat somewhat from the ramming of this rule change through. In his remarks, he seemed to extend the olive branch, as it were; to propose what we have proposed often in this debate — a legislative committee to look at this rule change, among others.

And I want to just quote, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice in this House on May 11, 1989. He said, and I quote:

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I still am concerned about this concept of the rule changes being introduced in this way.

He's referring to the government unilaterally introducing the rule change and ramming it through. He said, on May 11, I'm concerned about that kind of a concept as we are concerned, as all members should be concerned.

He went on to say:

And before I take my place, I make this point to 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 the issue is the process, then I ask them to do that.

Well we've done that over and over and over again, Mr. Speaker. Members on this side of the House have said over and over again that one of our major concerns in this debate is a majority government unilaterally ramming a rule change through. We've said that over and over.

The Minister of Justice went on:

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

Mr. Speaker, a wise, a wise suggestion on the part of the Minister of Justice; a suggestion that we would be more than happy to follow up.

He went on to say:

. . . I offer that challenge to the members opposite. If they are interested, Mr. Speaker, in the tradition, primarily, and in the process, Mr. Speaker, that they will take up that option.

Mr. Speaker, we have said over and over again, we are ready and willing to take up the option that was brought into this House on May 11 by the Minister of Justice.

He concluded by saying:

We can get into this battle, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps this is an opportunity by which together we can preserve the tradition of changing the

rules, but at the same time bring some discipline to the ringing of bells.

Mr. Speaker, I agree entirely with what the Minister of Justice was saying in this House on May 11.

**An Hon. Member:** — It was well said.

**Mr. Calvert:** — It was well said, as my colleague from Saskatoon says.

Mr. Speaker, our leader, the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. member from Riversdale, in his response that very day, in his response to this motion and then specifically to the offer made by the Minister of Justice, this is what he said. I'm quoting, Mr. Speaker, from page 1091 of *Hansard*, May 11, 1989, the Leader of the Opposition:

Now having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Justice has suggested a committee of two or three, as I understand it, from each side, be set up, established in the next reasonable while to consider the issues pertained by this motion. I think that that's a suggestion which is worthy of consideration, careful consideration, by this opposition.

Further down, he repeats:

I think therefore 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 . . .

This was a Friday, Mr. Speaker, Friday, May 11. The leader asked if we could consider over the course of the weekend, and committed to the Minister of Justice that we would respond to his offer on Monday of the following week.

He says in conclusion, the Leader of the Opposition:

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.

We were at that point, Mr. Speaker, in this debate where I think we should be today and should have stayed then — the Minister of Justice proposing a legislative committee to deal with the rule change in the traditional fashion. Because the Minister of Justice said that day he was concerned, concerned about the precedent of a majority government ramming through a unilateral change regarding the rules of the House, rules that affect every member. The Minister of Justice made that point.

We have responded yes, we are concerned about that process. We've said it over and over again. The Leader of the Opposition clearly gave every indication to the Minister of Justice that we would be willing to very seriously consider that proposal and respond in a very timely fashion.

**An Hon. Member:** — But you can't trust us.

**Mr. Calvert:** — The member opposite says we can't trust them, the member opposite. That's the member from Saltcoats . . . from Esterhazy and Saltcoats. I'll tell you who can't be trusted, is a minister who comes into this House on a Thursday and offers a legislative committee, and then by Monday of the next week pulls the offer.

The next time we come back to the House on this motion, the offer is gone and we're right back to where we were prior to Thursday, May 11, when the Minister of Justice comes in and says we're going to ram through the rule change. We're right back to where we were.

Now I ask, who can be trusted when a minister of the Crown comes into the House, makes an offer; we in good faith say that we will give it serious consideration. Indeed we have recommended the very same thing over and over again. The Minister of Justice, the very next week comes into this House and withdraws the offer, pulls the offer. Now I believe it was the Thursday of the next week — Wednesday or the Thursday of the next week. So much for trust.

Now that's what we're faced with, Mr. Speaker. We're faced with an offer made and then an offer pulled, unilaterally pulled. We would not be into this debate today if that committee could have been established — and we were ready to establish it. We would not be into this debate today. But here we are. That's the situation that it's got us here.

We've got a government that's just bent now, just bent on pushing this thing through. Because I guess in their own considerations they feel there's no other way they're going to accomplish that political goal of privatizing SaskEnergy. This has become their *cause célèbre* privatization, the privatization of SaskEnergy. And if you need this tool to do it, well then they are determined to get this tool.

Mr. Speaker, in this debate members on this side have said, and I say it again, we are ready; we are ready to form that committee to consider rule changes in this House. Obviously it's not just the rule regarding bells that needs to be considered — whole wide variety of other rules, and I want to talk about that. We are ready. If members opposite would caucus and decide let's get out of this situation by doing just that; let's get out of this situation by coming together in that committee.

Mr. Speaker, in this debate government members when they've spoken both in the debate and other occasions in the House, in Crown Corporations Committee and other places, in public and the press, they have consistently said that the 17 days of bell-ringing, the 11 sitting days, about the two weeks when this legislature was not functioning, that that was undemocratic. The member from Shaunavon today in his remarks used that phrase on a number of occasions — undemocratic.

Well you see, Mr. Minister, that might be a little . . . it might make more sense if it were coming from another government, or from other lips. But in this case, when this

government, members opposite describe as what happened in those 17 days as being undemocratic . . . Well one, I think firstly that they're wrong. I think they're wrong. It's simply untruthful. But secondly, I think that's hypocritical. I think it's the height of hypocrisy for these members to suddenly describe themselves as the great defenders of democracy, and to describe an occasion when the people can express their opinion as being undemocratic.

Mr. Speaker, in this debate other members have reviewed the notable examples when bells have been rung in Canadian legislatures and parliaments, and they are few in number, which is an indication that this rule has not been abused neither in this legislature nor elsewhere.

But the members have reviewed those situations. There are notably four, I guess, counting the incident here in Saskatchewan when the bells rang. Today the member from Regina Centre reminded us of that other occasion in this legislature when the bells rang for more than a few hours, that situation that dealt with him as a member and a matter of privilege.

The two other significant examples, the one, as you well know, Mr. Speaker, occurred in Manitoba. In that situation the Supreme Court of Canada had ordered the translation of laws in Manitoba. The government of the day introduced legislation to see that done.

It was extremely unpopular in Manitoba, as you well know and we well know. And the Progressive Conservative opposition . . . Mr. Speaker, I remind you it was the Progressive Conservative opposition in Manitoba who rang the bells on that occasion, protesting that legislation. And they rang the bells knowing that they had wide public support. They wouldn't have done it had they not enjoyed that wide public support.

The other and perhaps more notable example of bell-ringing in Canadian parliaments was the bell-ringing that took place in Ottawa in 1982, in March of 1982. And again you recall, Mr. Speaker, the events of that bell-ringing.

The federal Liberal government at that time had moved an omnibus energy Bill with any number of provisions. The Progressive Conservative opposition of the day in Ottawa, wanted the Bill split into more manageable portions, more debatable portions, more reasonable portions. The federal government of the day, the Liberal government, refused, and the Progressive Conservative opposition, federal opposition of the day, rang the bells.

(1630)

And they rang those bells for 14 days; they rang the bells in the House of Commons for 14 days — the Progressive Conservative opposition in Ottawa in 1982. They did it, Mr. Speaker, because they felt that to be a significant public issue. And I agree with them; it was. And they did it because they knew that Canadians from coast to coast shared the view — shared the view that it was inappropriate that that kind of legislation would be brought forward in the House of Commons and debated.

They rang the bells. And in essence they won the day, because eventually the Bill was divided and debated. Now that, Mr. Speaker, was the Progressive Conservative opposition in Ottawa that rang the bells for 14 days. It was the Progressive Conservative opposition in Manitoba that rang the bells on the French translation issue.

Now why I say it's hypocritical for these members now to be describing the ringing of bells as undemocratic . . . you see, in those days, when their members were ringing bells elsewhere — not a peep, not a peep. In fact, they were congratulating their colleagues. And I understand that. They were congratulating their colleagues for using that tool — for using that tool to promote public discussion; for using that tool to let the people of Manitoba in one case, to let the people of Canada in the other case, express their opinion on an important issue, on an issue of public concern.

Not once did the Progressive Conservatives in Saskatchewan describe what their colleagues in Manitoba were doing or their colleagues in Ottawa were doing, as undemocratic. You see, Mr. Speaker, the ringing of bells only becomes undemocratic when it's the arrogance of members opposite that is somehow being challenged, or when it's their policy that's being challenged. That's the only time it becomes undemocratic. Mr. Speaker, I find that hypocritical.

Mr. Speaker, I find it hypocritical also that this government should describe the act of an opposition, and this opposition in this situation, as undemocratic for putting the function of this legislature on hold for a period of two weeks. They describe that as undemocratic.

But I ask them, what about the nine months, the nine long months that this legislature didn't sit; when this legislature was absolutely silent because the government opposite didn't recall this legislature. The Premier and the cabinet refused to call this legislature. And this is just in the past year.

For two weeks the bells rang in this legislature, enabling the people of Saskatchewan to express their opinion, their view on the privatization of SaskEnergy. That's undemocratic, according to them. If people have a voice, that's undemocratic.

But for nine long months in this past year, this place sat silent; no members present, no public debate of important issues. Why? Because the Premier, the Deputy Premier, his cabinet and the caucus, decided this legislature would not sit. Now which is the undemocratic? When it's absolutely necessary to their political ends, then they will recall the legislature.

But I tell you, Mr. Speaker, if they could get away with it, I wonder if we would ever sit. They describe a two-week suspension of activity in this House while the people of Saskatchewan debate an important issue, as undemocratic. And yet they are the government who will let this legislature sit idle for nine months, stifling all public discussion of important issues.

Mr. Speaker, these are the people who now want to describe two weeks of public discussion as somehow

being undemocratic. These are the people that left the constituency of Saskatoon Eastview without a sitting member for a year — refused to call a by-election for a year — I think at that time the largest constituency in the province. The largest constituency in the province, population-wise, without a sitting member for a year. That's the view of democracy this government takes.

We come back after the nine-month delay, and what's the first thing that happens in this legislature once we're recalled? Bill 1, An Act to Establish the Department of Public Participation. And if that Bill passes, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, all sorts of power, all sorts of power scooped up into the hands of cabinet — taken from the legislature, taken from all members, taken from the people, scooped into the hands of cabinet.

**The Speaker:** — Order. I believe the hon. member is straying from the topic. I'd like to bring that to his attention.

**Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite describe the reasoning for this motion, their reasoning for limiting the ringing of bells in the Saskatchewan legislature is because an extended ringing of bells is somehow undemocratic. Mr. Speaker, I find that hypocritical. These are the people who refused to recall this legislature; these are the people that have introduced Bills into this legislature that, in my view, place much too much power in the hands of cabinet. For this government to somehow today describe itself as the friend and defender of democracy, I view as hypocrisy, and hypocrisy of the highest order.

And I remind you, Mr. Speaker, we didn't hear a peep, not a word, not a sound of the accusation of somebody being undemocratic when it was their own members, their own party that were ringing the bells for what were good reasons in Ottawa and in Manitoba, from their point of view.

And I go back to this point, Mr. Speaker. When their colleagues, the PC opposition in Ottawa and the PC opposition in Manitoba, rang the bells, they did so and could only do so because they knew they had the support, the vast public support behind them.

Mr. Speaker, we rang the bells in this House because we knew that support for what we were doing in this House existed in this province in vast numbers.

Mr. Speaker, there is a check and a balance built into bell-ringing. No political party in opposition can undertake the ringing of bells lightly. Because if you do not enjoy public support for what you are doing, you will pay a heavy political price. There is no question about that. It cannot be undertaken lightly.

That has its own check and balance within it. This rule cannot be abused. If it is abused by any opposition — and I don't care who is sitting on this side of the House — if that rule is abused by any opposition, there will be a political price to pay, and anyone in opposition will know that. It can only be used when public opinion supports what an opposition is doing, and that was the case in this province.

The people of Saskatchewan were saying, stop this government, stop it from its sell-off of SaskPower. They wanted a chance to express that opinion; we gave them that chance, Mr. Speaker. And so I would argue in this debate, I would argue that the ringing of bells, rather than being something anti-democratic, is an important tool in the democratic functioning of a society.

In our British parliamentary system of government, the ringing of bells can be a very democratic tool. Because I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that during those 17 days democracy in Saskatchewan was not stifled. Democracy in this province was not stifled. In those 17 days democracy in this province flourished, in my view, simply flourished, as it hasn't for years and years and years and years.

Mr. Speaker, when the bells of this House rang, it focused public attention on an important public issue. Attention was focused on this issue because the bells were ringing in this place in a way that no other tool could have provided. What happened in those two weeks when this legislature, when this room was silent, but the political debate was happening outside? Well all over this province it wouldn't matter where you go, people were talking about the privatization of SaskPower. I submit you could go to any town in Saskatchewan and that was the subject of conversation during those 14, 17 days.

Mr. Speaker, during that time I had opportunity to travel to Swift Current to meet with people in the community of Swift Current over this issue and discuss this with the press in Swift Current. On my way down to Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, I stopped at a coffee shop. I was alone; I sat down alone. Behind me, in the booth behind me, four people were sitting. Now we're into spring, but the conversation wasn't about the weather. We're into hockey finals. The conversation wasn't about hockey. We're almost into seeding, but the conversation wasn't about seeding. The conversation at that table was the privatization of SaskPower . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And those four people . . . I admit to the member from Rosthern, I eavesdropped. I couldn't help it; I was sitting there and they were speaking loudly. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell that member they were some upset with his government and what his government intends to do with SaskEnergy.

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — And he would be well-advised to visit some of the coffee shops in his own constituency and hear what people are saying.

Mr. Speaker, that conversation in that small coffee shop in a town along the Trans-Canada Highway, I submit, would not have been taking place, would not have been taking place if the bells of this building were not ringing. The ringing of the bells in this place, in this Assembly, gave the people a focus. The people of our province were given a focus. And that, as the Leader of the Opposition says, is a very democratic act. What could be more democratic?

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — All across this province, anywhere I travelled, anywhere members of this caucus travelled, people were talking about the privatization of SaskPower and they were saying everywhere: what has gone wrong with this government?

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. The member is getting into specific issues outside of the issue that is before the legislature, and I've certainly called government and opposition members to order on this. The issue before the legislature is rule 33(1), and specific issues outside of that can be debated at other times. There is motions on the order paper, or the members can put motions on the order paper to discuss different issues, but the issue here is the process of changing the rules, or the rule change.

**Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This rule that we're now debating, this motion, this motion to change the rules so that the bells of the legislature could ring for a maximum period of one hour, I would argue, could never provide that same opportunity for the wide public discussion to take place on any issue, on any issue of public importance, as this issue clearly was.

In one hour that debate just couldn't happen, just couldn't happen as it did in this case. And I argue again, it can only be on a very, very significant issue that bells are rung. They can't be rung indiscriminately. I mean, an opposition would soon suffer the political consequences. But on an issue of extreme public importance the ringing of bells can provide an opportunity for wide public discussion, discussion that extends from kitchen tables to coffee shops to work places to neighbours meeting on the street. Mr. Speaker, this is not the only forum for debate and discussion in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — It is more than appropriate in my view that issues like the privatization of SaskPower be discussed in the coffee shops on the No. 1 Highway. So Mr. Speaker, I would view therefore this rule change to be anti-democratic in that sense.

During that two-week period — 17 days, Mr. Deputy Speaker — people across this province . . . And again, no matter where you wanted to go in this province, people signed petitions. They signed petitions voicing their opinion that what the government was doing in this case was completely and absolutely wrong. They wanted their opinion to be heard in their legislature. They took that age-old practice of petitioning their government.

They had the opportunity to do that because the bells were ringing; they had the opportunity to do that because the bells were ringing. They had the opportunity to get petitions and take them to their neighbours, and I know this happened all over the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all over the province.

They had the opportunity to take those petitions. Residents of nursing homes were taking petitions; senior citizens in high-rises were taking petitions. We had young people, teenagers . . . I met young people, teenagers, taking petitions and finding that residents of the province wanted to express their opinion on this very significant

public issue. They had time to do that. They had time and the opportunity to petition their legislature, to petition their government . . .

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

(1645)

**Mr. Calvert:** — . . . to petition their government to stop — stop the privatization of SaskPower.

Mr. Speaker, during those two weeks, during that time when the functioning of this House was put on hold to allow people to voice their opinion on the privatization of SaskPower, democracy, in my view, flourished. It flourished in a way it hasn't for years in this province. We saw people gather, not only the four people who gathered in the coffee shop, not only gathering by fours, but by gathering by hundreds and thousands to discuss this issue.

Mr. Speaker, those gatherings took place because the bells were ringing in this legislature, because the issue was focused, because people fully understood — fully understood — what their government was doing. And they took that opportunity — they took that opportunity provided by this opposition — to meet, to gather, and to express that opinion. And they came, Mr. Speaker, by the thousands. They came by the thousands.

I had the opportunity to attend one or two of those meetings and I . . . Mr. Speaker, there were people at those meetings who I would not have expected to see at a meeting that was obviously sponsored and involved with the New Democratic Party. I saw members of all political parties at those meetings, expressing their displeasure with this government's intention.

Mr. Speaker, those meetings were possible, those meetings were possible because the bells were ringing in this House. The right to meet is surely a democratic right. Mr. Speaker, we gave that opportunity, we provided that opportunity when we rang the bells. I say, Mr. Speaker, democracy in this province flourished. It flourished.

Mr. Speaker, when those bells were ringing in this House, it gave we who are elected members, on all sides, an opportunity to go to the people that we represent; to the people of other constituencies. It gave all members the opportunity to travel the province and to hear what the people of Saskatchewan were saying; to view what the people wanted in terms of their government.

Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House took that opportunity, and we travelled. We travelled this province; we went from community to community; we were not afraid to meet the media in every community. We travelled in our own constituencies.

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — And, Mr. Speaker, what did members opposite do with that opportunity, with the opportunity to go out and to talk to the people of this province? What did they do? Well they hid in this room. They came in here day after day, hiding in this room. Well I'd have hidden,

Mr. Speaker, if my agenda was to privatize SaskPower. I'd hide, and I'd hide for a long time.

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, they had the opportunity; members opposite had the opportunity. We gave them the opportunity to go, to meet their constituents, their own people, to meet constituents in other constituencies. Did they take that opportunity, Mr. Speaker? No, they sat in this House. They sat in this House and hid from the people, Mr. Speaker. I would say, Mr. Speaker, in those two weeks, in those two weeks democracy in this province flourished in a way it hasn't for years and years and years.

Mr. Speaker, I've brought with me today just one letter, just one letter from two residents of the town of Brock, and that letter begins this way. Written to our opposition, this letter begins this way:

We wish to thank you for the longest bell-ringing in Canadian parliamentary history.

We wish to thank you. These people who live in Brock, Saskatchewan, they write and say:

We wish to thank you for the longest bell-ringing in Canadian parliamentary history.

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — And why? Why? Because, and I quote from their letter:

... because we object to SaskPower privatization and to the Devine government.

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — They know what it's all about. They know what it's all about.

**Hon. Mr. Klein:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe that in a debate where a member is quoting from a letter, he has to table that letter?

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. I've heard the member's point of order, and we've had a little delay because I wanted to get the exact citation for the member. Rule 327(6), indicates that:

A private Member has neither the right nor the obligation to table an official, or any other, document.

**Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have tabled in this House well over 90,000 signatures — 90,000 signatures. Every one — and there's more to come, Mr. Speaker, there's more to come — every one of those residents in Saskatchewan, their signature asking this government to stop its privatization of SaskPower. Now a lot of good it seems to have done. They're not listening, Mr. Speaker. We can table petitions, we can table letters. What alternative do we have but to ring bells, Mr. Speaker? What alternative does an opposition

have in the light of this kind of arrogance?

Mr. Speaker, this letter from the residents of Brock, and these writers write to this opposition saying:

We wish to thank you for the longest bell-ringing in Canadian Parliamentary history (and why?) because we object to SaskPower privatization and to the Devine government.

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — To go on, Mr. Speaker:

This is a very bad Bill, and Mr. Devine and his party must listen to the people of Saskatchewan. He's not even getting support from many who voted for the PCs, and he's losing many members due to this Bill.

We can see . . .

These are the residents of Brock saying:

We can see, if this government goes against the people, a change of government will have to come. Good luck (they say) and keep up the work. We want to thank you . . .

These residents of Brock say:

We want to thank you for the longest bell-ringing in Canadian parliamentary history . . .

They understand, Mr. Speaker, they understand that that bell-ringing enabled democracy to flourish in this province, and they understand that the rule change proposed to limit bell-ringing has one goal, and one goal only, and that's the privatization of SaskPower. If you can't do it through the front door, then you do it through the back door.

Mr. Speaker, when the people of this province were given an opportunity to speak on this issue, they spoke with clarity. They spoke with clarity. And, Mr. Speaker, of course because the issue was given the focus by the bell-ringing, it attracted not only provincial media attention but national media attention.

It attracted the attention of national pollsters. Had the bells not been ringing, I don't suppose that the major dailies in our province would have commissioned the major poll that they did. But because the bells rang, because the issue was focused, because the discussion was happening, the major dailies in our province — and I refer to the *Leader-Post* and the *Star-Phoenix* — the major dailies commissioned a poll. That poll records the public opinion.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to quote at length from this poll, but very germane, very germane to this debate was the opinion of the people of Saskatchewan saying that only 22 per cent of them, only 22 per cent supported what the government was doing; about 11 per cent, a very low percentage undecided; and a massive percentage, two-thirds of Saskatchewan people supporting what the



opposition was doing in opposing SaskPower and in ringing the bells.

**The Speaker:** — Order. The hon. member has been using repeated arguments on SaskPower as the reason for the bells ringing. And arguments are permitted, but repeated arguments of the same argument aren't permitted. They're referred to as tedious repetition in rule 25(2), and I would like to bring that rule to the hon. member's attention because I'm sure he'll agree that much of his speech has centred around that one argument.

**Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you very much. I sincerely hope that that argument has been made; I hope that argument has been made.

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — That argument very succinctly being that this whole thing arose because of the government's intention to privatize SaskPower and that this motion . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. I think the hon. member . . . I've brought it to his attention, and I think in a reasonable manner, and I believe that he should respond in a reasonable manner and go on to another argument, not simply take the opportunity to repeat the same argument.

**An Hon. Member:** — Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I just wonder . . . To clear this up, and I do this in the spirit of co-operation, but I wonder if you could make a ruling on whether or not it's in order to talk about Bill 21, which is the Bill that the bells rang on, An Act to amend The Power Corporation Act. That's the Bill that the bells rang on. I just wonder, is it not clearly appropriate and in order and germane to the discussion to speak to that Bill, which is, in fact, the power corporation Act. That's why the bells rang for 17 days. The letters that we're reading would indicate that the public understand that. We understand that they're connected, and I wonder, what is your ruling due to the issue of whether or not those two are connected?

**The Speaker:** — I've listened to the point of order. The discussion of the Bill is not in order. Reference to the issue . . . he has made many, many repeated references. That's my ruling, that the rules do not allow for a member to make the same argument over and over, which is what the hon. member has been doing.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — On another point of order. If I could get clarification on my point of order. My point of order was, can you speak and connect the Bill to the bell-ringing motion? That's what I was asking, not whether or not you could repeat over and over again, but is it within the rules to connect the two of them? That was my question, and I want you to rule on that particular issue.

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. I think the hon. member, if he's listened to this debate and previous one, knows that that connection has been made on different occasions

and it has been permitted. However, the repetition of the same connection, same argument, is not permitted, which is the point I'm trying to make — which is the point I'm trying to make.

Order. Order.

**Hon. Mr. Klein:** — Mr. Speaker, on that point of order, and the House Leader has brought this up several times, but he seems to want to have it both ways. On one hand he will argue that he is referring to the SaskPower on the point of order, and on the other hand he argues about SaskEnergy. I don't think he can have it both ways, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The hon. member doesn't have a point of order.

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

**Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for your ruling. And, Mr. Speaker, I will move on; I will move on then because there are many, many, many arguments that should convince all members in this House to vote this proposed motion down.

I'll turn then to what I see are the five important reasons why this motion as it exists now before us, the five important reasons why this motion is inappropriate, or in another phrase, why I feel this motion is wrong. It is wrong, first of all, because in my view — and inappropriate — because it is unilaterally made. It is a motion of a rule change proposed unilaterally by a majority government.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I will want to argue that this motion is inappropriate because it is a rule change proposed during the heat of battle, in the midst of what is obviously a strenuous conflict. I think that makes this motion inappropriate — the timing of it.

Mr. Speaker, I'll want to argue that, on a third point, this motion is inappropriate or wrong because it sets a wrong precedent. It sets a precedent that no one in this House can live with. For that reason I'll argue this motion is inappropriate.

I will argue that this motion is inappropriate because it's coming day after day at the exclusion of other important government business. It's being introduced in this House day after day at the exclusion of other important business.

And let's be clear who sets the agenda in here, Mr. Speaker. It is that group of men and women . . . it's the Premier, the Deputy Premier, and their House Leader, I guess, whoever it is these days. They set the agenda in this House, and day after day they bring this motion and so, therefore, I will argue that that is inappropriate because we are excluding other important business.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I will want to argue that it's inappropriate because it does not set out to review the entire rule picture in this legislature. It sets out to change but one. And if we are going to be dealing with rules, then let's look at the whole package, Mr. Speaker. Let's look at the whole package, because obviously from time to time

the rules of this Assembly must be amended and changed to meet the needs of the new day. And so I feel this motion is, on that basis, inappropriate and wrong because it seeks only, it seeks only to change one rule when we should be looking at the entire functioning of the House.

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

**The Speaker:** — It being 5 o'clock, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.