

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Martin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege again this year to introduce the students in grade 4 and 5 from W.F. Ready School in Wascana constituency. The students, of course, are well aware that they are accompanied by Marian Ready, who is the teacher for that class, grade 4 and 5, and also Miss Colleen Cleveland, who is the chaperon.

I started off to say that the students are aware that Bill Ready was recently honoured with a degree at the University of Regina campus, honorary doctorate of laws degree, for his contribution to the public school system in Regina, and they can be very proud of that.

So on behalf of all members, I will have an opportunity to meet with you in a little while, but will the members please join me in welcoming the students from grade 4 and 5 from W.F. Ready School in Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gleim: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you, through you, and to the Assembly, 12 grades 7 and 8 students from the town of Admiral in the Shaunavon constituency. It gives me great pleasure to introduce you people today.

I don't know if this is the first time you've been in the Assembly or not, but I hope you enjoy the working of the Assembly this afternoon. The first thing on the agenda will be question period, and right after question period, after 2:30, I will meet with you people out in room 214 to have drinks, and you will be able to ask some questions, and whatever, and hear your thoughts on how the Assembly is run. So with that, I would like everybody in the Assembly to help me welcome these students here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to introduce four senior citizens from Indian Head that are seated in the Speaker's gallery. They're in Regina today to participate in a life-styles survey that is being conducted at the (Dr.) Paul Schwann Centre.

I look forward to meeting you after question period. I hope you enjoy the procedures of the House, and I look forward to discussing the survey, the life-styles survey, with you. Welcome here to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, because the University of Regina is in my constituency, I'd like to add my comments to this research project, the life-styles research project, that is going on there. Ten groups, 10 communities from around the province will be invited in.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, that research reports indicate that physical activity can postpone the process of ageing. However, Mr. Speaker, there is not a great deal of research in that area, and that's why the University of Regina, physical activities study, and the Department of Culture and Recreation are involved in this program. It's a very good program, Mr. Speaker, and from that we'll get some good research that'll help us in the future.

And I certainly welcome the Indian Head people who are taking part in that process. Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Environmental Impact Study in Great Sand Hills Region

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask a question of the Minister of Mines and resources. Madam Minister, on May 26 your colleague, the Minister of the Environment, informed this House that Lone Pine Resources was asked to do an environmental impact study in the Great Sand Hills area before the government gives permission to the company to drill in this region. In 1980, a study by the Environment department concluded that the ecosystem of this region, and I quote, Madam Minister:

... is intolerant of greater than natural physical disturbance.

In view of this conclusion, why have you asked the company to do another environmental impact study, and is it because the government has already decided that it is going to give the permission to this company to go ahead with the drilling, and you're simply using this EIS (environmental impact study) in the same way as you used the Rafferty inadequate EIS to justify a decision you've already decided you're going to make?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Speaker, for the member's information, when Energy and Mines gives out a permit, it is not a blanket permit to go ahead and do the exploration. And in fact it states very clearly on the permit that they will require certain permissions: one, being the landowner, the surface rights owner; and secondly, that they must do an impact study.

Now the impact study, if it should indicate that a full assessment be done on the environment, then they must do that, and it is that process that they are in now, is the impact study. And then the Department of Environment will in fact determine whether they will require a full assessment study to be done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, since you already have a study which clearly says that any of this kind of activity will devastate this region from an environmental point of view, why have you therefore asked that there be another study made? What's the purpose of that study,

other than the fact that you want to cover up a decision which you know you're going to already make with regard to the permits?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Speaker, there is no cover-up on this. The process has been outlined for some time and hasn't changed much in terms of what the companies must do before they get the final approval to go ahead and do the drilling.

Now the area — and I don't know if the hon. member is familiar with it — but the area is very, very large. Now it is agreed that within that area there is a certain section that is highly vulnerable to activity. The companies to date have been on the outside of that area and are moving inward. The plan that Lone Pine has put forth in terms of drilling, not all those wells are moving towards the middle of that vulnerable area, but in fact are around the outside.

So they will still have to do the impact study. And if the well should take place towards the centre of that vulnerable system, then they will probably have to do the full assessment study. If in fact that study should show that they will not be able to do their exploration without damage to the land, then they will not be given approval to go ahead and do the drilling. That's pure and simple.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Madam Minister, are you saying to this House — a new question, Mr. Speaker — are you saying to this House that in spite of the fact that you already have a comprehensive 1980 study which tells the government that this kind of activity in this region will literally devastate the region, you are allowing the companies to infringe into the region, as you say, on a gradual basis, in spite of that study, and that you've asked them to do this EIS simply to be able to explain to the public that everything is going to be okay, in spite of that study which is already made? Is that what you're saying, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Speaker, the study that the companies must do — and this includes the impact study that they must submit to the Department of Energy and Mines, and to the full satisfaction of the Minister of Environment and the Department of Environment — if they should show that they cannot explore on this land without permanent damage being done to the land, then they will not receive the necessary approval that they would require to go ahead with the exploration.

Now while the member from Regina Rosemont, in all his wisdom again already knows long beforehand, and anybody else, the study that the member is referring to, Mr. Speaker, the 1980 study does indicate that the Great Sand Hills area is very fragile, and some areas are more fragile than others within the Great Sand Hills area itself.

Now my point is that the assessment study being done in fact is moving towards that most fragile area of the Great

Sand Hills area. If they should show that they cannot do it without damage, then they will not receive the necessary approvals.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — A new question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, your record on environmental impact studies is a very dismal one on the part of that government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now you're trying to convince this House and the people of Saskatchewan that you're going to protect the environment of the great sand dunes, but you don't even enforce existing regulations that you have in place.

And I want to bring to your attention a letter which your department received earlier this year to which you responded. It was a letter from secretary of the Cypress Surface Rights Association to your department, of which you and the Minister of Environment received a copy. And here is what it says. It was a letter requesting a public inquiry, and I quote:

Into the disposal and containment of waste fluids generated by various oil companies working in our area, there have been numerous instances of dumping and blowing fluids into the air, on private lands, on surface leases, and on R.M. road allowances.

Now, Madam Minister, your response to that letter was that you would not institute an inquiry. You have not decided to follow up and enforce your own regulations. Why have you not taken the steps that are necessary to deal with this problem of dumping this environmental-damaging water and waste and brine into the R.M. ditches and places on private lands where it's not supposed to be dumped? Where have you been on this matter, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Speaker, there was no need for an inquiry into the incident that the hon. member from Regina North East is talking about. For this . . .

An Hon. Member: — Just let it go on, let it go.

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — No, that's not true. If you would allow me to carry on, you will be informed on it.

There was no need for an inquiry. The regulations are very specific, through Saskatchewan Energy and Mines. And in fact the spills that did take place, the companies were investigated and they had to clean up and restore if there were any damage done. That took place.

That's why there was no need for an inquiry, because the field officers of Energy and Mines did in fact go out and look at it. So did the Department of Environment. And the companies were required to clean up the spills and to make sure that it was left as it was before they started.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Supplementary. A final supplementary to the minister. Madam Minister, in light of your answer, will you then make a commitment to this House that you will provide a report on where the companies have had to do the clean-up, what the locations were, and which companies had to do the clean-up, Madam Minister? Will you give a commitment to the House to do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Smith: — Mr. Speaker, I will endeavour to gather the information of the spills that we've had. I'm assuming that the member is asking on the west side, in that particular area, and I will send it to him.

Environmental Impact Study on Mine Project

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Acting Minister of the Environment. Mr. Minister, you will be aware that Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting is developing a mine in Manitoba near Namew Lake, which straddles our border, but the majority of that lake is sitting right here in the province of Saskatchewan.

There are concerns about the environmental impact of the mine which is being studied by the Manitoba government, and your government said it would monitor the report. Could you tell us the status of that report and what it says about heavy metals and other pollutants getting into the lake and the Saskatchewan River system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hardy: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not familiar with it. I'll take notice and bring the answer back to the House on behalf of the Minister of Environment.

Mr. Goulet: — While you're taking notice, Mr. Minister, there is further information. In regards to the fish in the area, we recognize from before that the sulphur dioxide emissions from the mining company, Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting, has knocked off trout and also the sturgeon in that area of Sturgeon Lake and Cumberland. Now we know that this, through the talks that have taken place so far, that it'll also destroy and kill the northern pike.

Do you feel that the destruction of fish at this stage makes it very, very imperative that Saskatchewan government take strong action in this case?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The minister has taken notice. The member has asked him to bring further information, and I think that's self-explanatory.

Order. The minister took notice. The member stood up and said, would you bring further information, which is correct — which is correct — and we will move to the next question.

Mr. Goulet: — My next question, Mr. Speaker, has to

relate to the operation of the mine. We know that in the operation of the mine they struck salt water, and millions of salt water brine is entering the water system. We also know that there was holes that were dug in the mine that were leaking right into the mine. I want to know, Mr. Minister, what will you do to rectify this pollution that is entering our Saskatchewan river system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hardy: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I said a moment ago I'm not familiar with it and I will have to take notice and bring the answer back to the House.

The Speaker: — We're perhaps getting things a bit confused here. Let's just go over it again, and I think it will make everything simpler. The member asked a question. The minister took notice. Then he wanted further information, which is absolutely correct. If he wishes further information on that he can ask the minister now, and then we'll move to a different question.

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, then I will direct my question to the minister in charge of northern Saskatchewan. In regards to the North, Madam Minister, the water is going to be directly affected, which will affect the drinking water system which is the only good, solid water that Cumberland House gets.

In regards to the aspect of it affecting also the tourist industry and also the fishing industry, what type of alternatives are you going to propose, Mr. Minister, when the destruction of the livelihood of the people and their drinking water is definitely affected in the long run in that area.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member I would say that that is an assumption on your part. In all my meetings with Northerners, this particular mine and the operation of this mine has never been brought up to me.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I will direct another question to the minister because she doesn't seem to know what's going on in the North, and most particularly in that area.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Minister, there was letters written to the Minister of the Environment where the band was evidently concerned about the environmental damage in that area. And that letter has already been written to the Minister of the Environment. I would like to know, Madam Minister, what you are going to do, along with the Minister of the Environment, to help out the communities of Cumberland House and Sturgeon Landing and the Indian bands in that area to make sure that we have good drinking water and a long-term basis of economic development, and making sure that the environment is in top condition the way it is now.

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, obviously the

member does not know what the northern affairs secretariat does — obviously. The northern affairs secretariat acts on behalf of all Northerners to access various departments when they're having problems. Obviously the letter was directed to the Minister of the Environment. It was not copied to me, and the Acting Minister of the Environment has taken notice with the commitment to bring the information back to the House.

Environmental Protection Legislation

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, given that we are in the midst of Environment Week, and in the absence of the Minister of the Environment, I guess I will direct my question to the House Leader.

Mr. Minister, I have here a copy of the *Hansard* of your government's throne speech, delivered in this House March 8, 1989. In this throne speech, you make some very grand promises about environmental protection legislation. You say, and I quote:

My government will introduce new legislation to protect the earth's ozone layer.

You say in this, and I quote:

Legislation will be introduced to allow a tax on environmentally unsafe products.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the House Leader is: where is the legislation to protect the ozone layer; where is the legislation to tax environmentally unsafe products?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, there will be legislation coming forward dealing with a tax of environmentally unsafe products, and I happen to know that it's very close to being tabled, Mr. Speaker. It's only a few short weeks ago that the Minister of Environment announced the environmental round table with very eminent, qualified persons sitting on that round table, Mr. Speaker.

There will be legislation coming forward dealing with soil conservation and water management, and we'd be happy to deal with them all, Mr. Speaker, the minute that we can vote on what has become known as the bell resolution, so that we can prevent the hijacking of this place by members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, new question. Mr. Minister, I asked two questions. I got a half an answer to one of those questions. Mr. Minister, my question is: where are the legislation . . . when can we expect the legislation providing taxes on environmentally unsafe projects, and when can we expect the legislation to protect the ozone layer?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, we'll move them forward just as soon as we can deal with them, but we've got some other matters to deal with first. The first, Mr. Speaker, is to bring some respect back to our democratic

institution, and that's our priority at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, new question to the minister. Mr. Minister, I believe this is day 53 of this legislative session. I ask you this. What is more important to you and to your government, the protection of the ozone layer or hobbling the opposition, privatizing SaskPower, and selling off our potash resources to foreigners?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — We're quite prepared to vote on the resolution this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. We're quite prepared to vote on the resolution whenever they are prepared to vote on it. We've heard every possible argument they could put up. Some of them made sense, but not many, Mr. Speaker.

I should also point out, while we're on day 53 or day 54 or 55, or whatever it is, there were 17 days, Mr. Speaker, 17 very unproductive days when they hijacked this place, Mr. Speaker, a distinct lack of respect for democratic institutions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canadian "88" Fertilizer Plants

Mr. Solomon: — In the absence of the Minister of Trade and Investment and the Premier, my question will be directed to the Deputy Premier, and it concerns your government's inability to tell the people of Saskatchewan the truth about the proposed Canadian "88" energy fertilizer plants in Rosetown, Melfort and Yorkton.

Mr. Minister, following question period on Tuesday, your Trade and Investment minister told the media that this company's plans to decentralize came about after the announcement of the Cargill plant. Greg Noval, president of the company, disagrees, and he says:

What Andrew came out and said is completely untrue. We've got to set the record straight.

He says your government knew the full proposal from the very beginning. Knowing as the people of Saskatchewan do, Minister, your penchant for twisting the truth, and your colleague's penchant for twisting the truth, I believe most people will take Mr. Noval's side of the story. And I ask you, why did your government once again try and mislead people about this issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the Minister of Trade and Investment may or may not have said to the media. I have no idea what members opposite, what interpretation they may put on what they read in the media. So you see, the farther you get away from the actual fact of it, the more distorted it becomes, Mr. Speaker. And I suppose if you put it through a couple more of his pockets, members, it would take another twist

before it got out on the floor.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, I sat in on one very, very early meeting with energy “88” people, and in that very early meeting — and I know nothing of what’s gone on since then — that one very early meeting that I sat in on, Mr. Speaker, there was only talk of one project in Rosetown, and I had not heard of the other projects, period, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Solomon: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Deputy Premier. Mr. Minister, to quote further Mr. Noval, and I quote:

These guys are just trying to cover their butts here. They look bad and they should look bad.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Solomon: — My question to you is this: given that your government is obviously trying to cover up the fact that your love of megaprojects has put you in the position of betraying a smaller industry which would have benefitted rural Saskatchewan, was the Minister of Trade and Investment designated as spokesman for this cover-up, because you and your cabinet colleagues are very familiar with his ability to not let the facts get in the way of an excuse?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I’d like to talk a little bit about some of these megaprojects that the member opposite alluded to. We have one in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker, called Phillips Cable; I think it employs about 20 or 30 people. We have one, Federal Pioneer, Mr. Speaker, that will employ maybe 100 and 150 people, I think, in Lumsden, Mr. Speaker. We have one in Saskatoon called DuPont Plastics. We have one in Saskatoon, SK Turbines. We have one in a small town in the north-west, Mr. Speaker, that it is making linemen’s gloves. I think there are two jobs in this plant. They are making gloves for SaskPower. We are making a 107 products in Saskatchewan that weren’t made prior to 1982, being sourced in Saskatchewan by SaskPower.

Now he’s telling us that we’re in love with megaprojects, Mr. Speaker. We like those too. We have Weyerhaeuser. We have two upgraders — two upgraders, Mr. Speaker — NewGrade and the bi-provincial upgrader. We have and will have the Rafferty and the Shand. And yes, Mr. Speaker, we will have a successful, up and running, and a very proud GigaText, one that all of us can be proud of, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Solomon: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the minister. Mr. Minister, your government and your Minister of Trade and Investment has implied that there is something evil about a company asking for a guaranteed interest rate, that it’s a grant that the taxpayers have to fork over, and they shouldn’t do so. Keeping in mind that this company had asked for a \$10 million loan at 7 per cent,

can you tell us how much of an unacceptable government grant Weyerhaeuser received for its 8.5 per cent guaranteed rate on a loan of \$248 million?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — The Weyerhaeuser, Mr. Speaker, that they said would never be built, the paper plant that would never be built, Mr. Speaker, and it’s out there churning out paper — the largest paper plant, fine paper plant in Canada, Mr. Speaker. It now has a sheeting — 30 million, I think — sheeting facility built on the end of it, or being built on the end of it. They have a lime plant there that wasn’t there before with about 20 jobs in it, Mr. Speaker. They have doubled the capacity of Saskatoon Chemicals, Mr. Speaker. What’s that lumber mill out there?

An Hon. Member: — Big River.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Big River lumber mill, they’ve improved that, rebuilt it, redesigned it, more productive.

Mr. Speaker, the Weyerhaeuser deal was a good deal, and I continue to believe that it was a good deal. And the people in Prince Albert, in spite of the fact that your colleagues are against it, the people of Prince Albert like it, Mr. Speaker. Now let’s talk about some of the smaller projects.

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. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are this day in the midst of environment week. We have a number of major environmental concerns in this province and in this world. Rather than this day, day 53 of the Legislative Assembly, rather than debating important legislation that is supposed to be introduced dealing with the environment, what has this government judged to be the most important issue facing the province of Saskatchewan? Bell-ringing in the Saskatchewan legislature.

Mr. Speaker, who else in this province holds that view? Only members opposite, I submit, only this island of arrogance that sits across from us in the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this motion that we are debating, and have debated, and will apparently debate for some time yet — this motion is unprecedented

because it has for its motivation a partisan political purpose. Its motivation of course is to do through the back door what they couldn't do through the front door, and that's to privatize SaskPower.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — It is unprecedented, Mr. Speaker, it is unprecedented because in the history of this legislature, never before has a rule change of this degree been rammed through or attempted to be rammed through by a majority government without consultation, negotiation, and an all-party committee.

Mr. Speaker, I said a moment ago we sit across from an island of arrogance; that any government would attempt to do this in a legislature, to ram through a rule change unilaterally, is evidence of that arrogance. Mr. Speaker, I am not the only one, and we are not the only ones who now view this government as that island of arrogance.

Mr. Speaker, I refer to an editorial that appeared in the Swift Current *Sun* on May 29, 1989. In the Swift Current *Sun*, published in the city of Swift Current May 29, 1989, the headline of that editorial, Mr. Speaker, is this. The Swift Current *Sun* in its editorial says, "The Devine government . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, members opposite are beginning to cross the floor. It may be a good sign.

And is it any wonder that members opposite would be considering crossing the floor or resigning or leaving because of editorials that appear in newspapers across this province like this one from the Swift Current *Sun*, May 29, 1989, the headline of this editorial being, "The Devine government shows its contempt."

That's what we see with this motion we're now debating — contempt, Mr. Speaker — contempt not only for this institution, contempt not only for the opposition, but contempt for the people of Saskatchewan, because the people of Saskatchewan know what this motion's about. They know it's this government's effort to privatize SaskPower. They've spoken on that issue.

They've told this government that they're clearly wrong to change the direction. This motion is clearly contemptuous — contemptuous of this legislature, contemptuous of the traditions of this House, contemptuous of the opposition, and contemptuous of the people of Saskatchewan. The Swift Current *Sun* has it right. "The Devine government shows its contempt", that's what it says. And, Mr. Speaker, the editorial that I refer to begins with this sentence, begins with this sentence:

The provincial government seems to think lately that it can do anything it wants; drink our liquor from an old fruit jar, slander our names all over the place, even step on our blue suede shoes.

That's how the Swift Current *Sun* begins their editorial. Now listen how they conclude that editorial. They, in the editorial, give examples and evidence of how this government thinks it can do anything it wants. They refer to the Barber Commission being set up and financed in

spite of public opinion. And the editorial here refers to what it describes as the Willard Lutz affair and the Minister of Justice's unprecedented attack on the Provincial Auditor.

It says in the editorial to that issue, "The Tories" (I quote) responded shamefully." The editorial talks about the Securities Commission order to stop the SaskEnergy hearings and advertisements. It reminds the people of Swift Current what this government did in that case — well, it didn't like the law so it just changed the law for its own benefit.

Mr. Speaker, the editor of the Swift Current *Sun*, reflecting feelings in that community, said this at the conclusion of his editorial or her editorial, I'm not sure:

The rest of us must play by the rules. The Devine government makes them up as it goes along. In short, it does as it damn well pleases.

And that's a quote, Mr. Speaker. "In short," says the editorial of the Swift Current *Sun*, "this government does as it damn well pleases."

Mr. Speaker, we see clear evidence of that in this motion, in this unprecedented, unprecedented kind of motion where a majority government comes into this legislature and attempts to ram through a rule change, contemptuous of the traditions of this House, contemptuous of the traditions of British parliaments across the globe, contemptuous of the opposition, but most of all contemptuous of public opinion in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I said at the conclusion of my remarks yesterday afternoon that I view this motion to be inappropriate and wrong on at least five counts.

Inappropriate and wrong, first of all, because it is proposed unilaterally, proposed by the government without discussion of the opposition.

Secondly, it's inappropriate and wrong, in my view, because this motion is being made, this rule change is being proposed, not calmly and rationally, but being proposed in the heat of battle, when obviously the battle — the political battle — is fierce. In the midst of that conflict, the government seeks to choose a rule change.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, I feel this motion, as it now stands and is presented to the House, is inappropriate, is wrong, because it sets a precedent, and the precedent it sets is a precedent that no opposition — past, present, or future — could ever live with. It's a dangerous precedent that I don't think any government should set so that any future government could look back on.

Fourthly, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps most importantly, perhaps most importantly, I view this motion that we're now debating to be inappropriate, and in that sense wrong, because we are debating this motion at the exclusion of important other government business that we should be debating in this House.

And fifthly, Mr. Speaker, I believe it to be inappropriate,

and therefore wrong, for one single rule to be changed without a wider look at all of the rules which affect this Legislative Assembly and its functioning. If we are going to do rule changing, if we are going to look at the rules of this Assembly, it is only appropriate, in my view, that we should look at many of the rules of this Assembly, not singling out one, but doing that which is right and looking at all of the rules of this Assembly. And everyone admits, rules of the Assembly will from time to time be changed to meet the needs of a new day.

So with those five reasons in mind, Mr. Speaker, I would like to carry on this debate.

Point number one: I view this motion to be inappropriate and wrong because it is being introduced unilaterally. Mr. Speaker, as you well know, the rules of this Assembly, the rules of the legislature, govern all members. These are not rules that simply affect members of the government or members of the opposition. When rules are made in this legislature, they affect all members.

Is it therefore unreasonable to suggest that when rules are to be changed, that all members should be involved; that all members have an interest in these changes? Is it not unreasonable to suggest, Mr. Speaker, therefore that all members should be involved?

In this case, the government has excluded the opposition from being part of this rule change; the rule change is being introduced unilaterally. Because, Mr. Speaker, the rules of this House affect all members, I would argue that all members should be, and have always been in past, involved in discussing the rule change. And so when the rule change is brought to the House, there is already agreement, and little debate will take place.

Mr. Speaker, these rule changes affect the role of all MLAs, whether we're on the government side or on the opposition side. And therefore, if we are affected as MLAs and functioning in this House, then our responsibilities and role within the province, within our democracy, is also affected. We are elected, Mr. Speaker, to serve our constituents and to serve the province as a whole.

If rule changes introduced in this House affect either the operation of the government or the operation of opposition, if rule changes affect government members or opposition members, then our role in the society is affected. And so I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that when rules are changed in this place there is an effect in the wider functioning of government. If that is going to take place, it's my argument, Mr. Speaker, that all members should be part of the discussion; that it should not be made unilaterally by one side or the other side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, if it can be argued somehow that it is justified that a majority government could introduce a motion like the one we are now debating and unilaterally pass that motion, then in essence what that is saying is that we have a government who cares not a whit for an opposition, who takes the view that democracy is better served without the voice of opposition. That can be the only conclusion. If a government wishes to ram a rule change through involving this House, involving the

parliament, the legislature, and it seeks to do it unilaterally, then that is saying, not so subtly, that opposition has no role, that somehow democracy would be better served if there were not an opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I for one find that unacceptable. I find that unacceptable in our British parliamentary tradition; therefore, I argue that a unilateral introduction of a rule change into a parliament, into a legislature, is inappropriate. Therefore, I feel this motion is wrong.

(1445)

If I might draw an analogy, Mr. Speaker. If we are considered to be opposing teams involved in a contest, then the analogy I would draw is that what we have here is that the losing team, the team that knows they're in trouble, is somehow in the midst of the game seeking to change the rules. Now who could consider that to be fair when all players on both teams are affected by the same rules? Who would consider it fair or reasonable or responsible that one of the teams would unilaterally change the rules, particularly when that team find itself in difficulty? So that is my first point, Mr. Speaker, that the motion is inappropriate because it is being introduced and rammed through unilaterally.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier and wish to say again that I think this motion, its introduction at this time is inappropriate because of its timing; because it has come in the midst of a very strenuous political battle, not only in this legislature, but across the province. I reviewed some of the history that brought this motion to the House yesterday. I need not do that again; others have.

But obviously this motion came as the government's response to not only the opposition's ringing of the bells in this House, but to the public response. Very first thing back, we were introduced with a motion by the government to change the ringing of the bells. That kind of timing, Mr. Speaker, in my view is wrong. No reasonable, rational men and women would want to change such fundamental rules of a democratic institution in that kind of atmosphere, it seems to me. Surely it would be more appropriate for a group of members from this House, from both sides, when this session is over to sit down together, when the heat of battle in this place is over, when some of the public issue has died, to sit down rationally and reasonably, apart from this place, apart from this setting, and review this rule and all the rules very carefully. I do not see that as unreasonable. I see that, in fact, as the direction we ought to be going.

Mr. Speaker, I invite members opposite who have not spoken in the debate, I invite them to tell me why that's an unreasonable proposition. I invite them to say to us why it is that it's somehow appropriate to be debating this kind of rule change in the heat of battle. I invite them, when they stand in this House to speak in this debate, I invite them to show me precedent where a majority government has instilled a rule change on its parliament at the exclusion of discussions with the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge members opposite. I invite them to respond to these questions and many others that I'll

want to raise. Why, members opposite, why is now the time? Tell us why that this is the time that this rule should be changed. Tell us where is the precedent of a government inflicting a rule change on a legislature unilaterally. I invite members to do that.

Members from the government side who have spoken in this debate thus far have not spoken to those questions. I invite the next speaker on the government side to do that.

An Hon. Member: — Why at the exclusion of all other business?

Mr. Calvert: — And as my colleague from Regina North asks: why this debate at the exclusion of all other business? Why?

Mr. Speaker, I see this rule to be inappropriate as well because it does set a precedent. There can be no question about that. If, in fact, the government is successful in changing the rules without the very traditional legislative committee and review and report to all members, then that is a precedent, a precedent to which future governments can look back on.

Mr. Speaker, if this government is allowed to change this rule, if this motion were to pass the House and the government therefore would have had set this precedent, where would that leave us in terms of other rules changes? Is it unreasonable to ask, from an opposition point of view, which rule is next? Which procedure of the House is next?

Could it be, Mr. Speaker, that if a government — and I'm not saying this government; any government — if this kind of precedent exists, could it be that some day after an extremely difficult question period a government caucus would meet and say, well we can't handle this. We just can't handle this, so let's limit question period to 15 minutes, or let's limit it to 10 minutes, or let's do away with it altogether. I mean, question period has not always been a part of this legislature or the British parliamentary tradition.

This kind of precedent exists, that a government who finds that a rule is giving it a political problem, if the precedent then says the government unilaterally can simply change the rule, what is to prevent this government or some future government from doing just that?

What would prevent this government from deciding that certain reports do not need to be tabled? What would prevent this government or any future government from unilaterally changing the rule to say that, well, we're only going to sit one day a week?

All of these rules, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, did not come about quickly. They've evolved over time, with the changing needs, but they've always been done with the co-operation and the negotiation of all members. To set a precedent which says a government, of its own initiative, in a time of obvious political trouble — there's no debate about that — can therefore come into the legislature and change the rules of the game, change the rules of the legislature for all concerned, that, Mr. Speaker, I think is a

very dangerous precedent.

And to follow up in the observations made by the member from Regina Centre, it seems to me the only government that would want to set that kind of precedent is a government that's absolutely sure that it will never find its way into opposition. The only government that would dare set that kind of precedent is a government that is so arrogant that it thinks it will never, ever be defeated.

Well, Mr. Speaker, history well shows that in this province and in every democratic nation and province in the world, history shows that governments do not last for ever. In this province it is a significant feat to win three elections in a row. Few governments have sat three terms in a row. Most governments are defeated after two terms, and some after one. And some of us wish that would have been happening in 1986.

Mr. Speaker, the only government that would want to set this kind of precedent, where a government can unilaterally change the rules of the House, is a government that assumes it's going to have those levers of power for ever.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious in this province that this certainly isn't going to be true after the next provincial election. There will be a change in this province, and I ask members opposite, do you want that precedent set for some future government?

An Hon. Member: — If you're so confident, let it go.

Mr. Calvert: — The Hon. Minister of Finance has a question. You see, Mr. Minister, I'm concerned that a Liberal government might take over some day, and then what do you think they would do to your members?

An Hon. Member: — He might be part of it.

Mr. Calvert: — He may be part of it; he may be part of it.

Mr. Speaker, I object to this motion on that basis, that it is precedent-setting. It is the precedent of a school-yard bully, a school-yard bully being able to inflict his or her will on the school yard. And, Mr. Speaker, no one appreciates a school-yard bully, and we don't need that kind of precedent in the Saskatchewan legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that the rules of the legislature were not all crafted in an instant; indeed, they've evolved over decades, over centuries. It is a process of evolution that rules change to meet the needs of a new day. But that kind of process only happens with mutual discussion and negotiation. That kind of evolution has never happened with a unilateral action of a majority government inflicting its will, particularly a majority government that has itself in trouble. So, Mr. Speaker, it would be, I think, a very dangerous precedent to set in this House, if in fact the motion passes.

Mr. Speaker, that we should be debating this motion today, in my view, is totally inappropriate because we are debating a rule change for the Legislative Assembly, and have done for some days now at the exclusion of so much other important, important government business.

Mr. Speaker, I had the rare privilege yesterday morning to speak to a group of about 500, maybe more, public school students in the city of Moose Jaw, and many of their parents and many of their teachers. They were gathered yesterday morning in Moose Jaw to celebrate Canada Day. Mr. Speaker, if you'd permit me the aside, it was a very moving experience to be on a platform and to look out over that crowd of children dressed primarily in red and white, and waving the flags and the balloons, and singing *O Canada*.

Mr. Speaker, I left that group of young people, kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, grade 3, their parents and teachers, and came into this legislature to find a government — and it wasn't much different, I guess — to find a government who yesterday names the most significant issue facing the people of Saskatchewan as a rule change in the provincial legislature. And I thought to myself, if those children could be consulted, and their parents and their teachers, would they say that the uppermost thing on their minds yesterday was whether the rules in the Saskatchewan legislature were changed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I may be wrong, but it seems to me that many of the children, well, they're concerned that their parents have jobs, and they worry about their parents and their job security. And some of those children know that their parents are going to have to leave the province to seek work. Those children know that some of their class-rooms are overcrowded, particularly in the south-west corner of my constituency. Those are the kind of issues that, it seems to me, that if the children were asked, they would expect their government — their government — to be dealing with.

And, Mr. Speaker, I remind you that the group of men and women opposite are the Government of Saskatchewan. They are the government. We may wish it not to be so, but it is. It's fact. That group of men and women are the Government of Saskatchewan, and it is their responsibility to govern on behalf of all the people of the province, and to govern to meet the needs and the hopes and the aspirations of those people, and, I would submit, also to listen to the wishes.

This government is the government for that group of children and their parents and teachers who were gathered yesterday in Moose Jaw. I submit, this government has therefore grown completely out of touch, completely out of touch, because I come to the legislature expecting to meet a government that wants to deal with the real issues facing the people of the province. And what do we find? A government that considers bell-ringing, a change in bell-ringing, to be the most important issue. And there can be no other interpretation of events because it is the government who sets the agenda for the Legislative Assembly. Daily this government decides what issues — except Tuesday's when time is given to the opposition and private members — on every other day of the week it is the government that introduces the agenda for the House.

So yesterday a number of important issues were raised during the question period facing women and families in this province — a number of very significant and

important issues dealing with family poverty, with day care.

Mr. Speaker, what happened after the question period? Well rather than the family protection legislation; rather than dealing with, for instance, the estimates from the Minister of Social Services, the government chose not to do those things but to introduce this debate again on bell-ringing.

Mr. Speaker, it is the government opposite who sets the agenda. The obvious tradition, well-known tradition of the parliamentary system, is that the government proposes and the opposition disposes. It is the government that proposes, it is the government that sets the agenda, it is the government that decides what is important to be dealing with at any given time.

This session, and this particular motion, would indicate this government has one priority, and that's privatization, because obviously we've dealt with little or nothing else. Because this motion is clearly meshed with the privatization agenda, it is one further example that the goal of the government, the agenda of the government is privatization.

Today, Mr. Speaker, in question period, this being Environment Week, a number of questions were raised concerning environmental issues: concern over the Great Sand Hills, concern from northern Saskatchewan, concern about the legislation — important concerns — concerns about the ozone layer. And the government has made commitments, has made promises, grand promises that they intend to do something, sometime in this session. We've got the promises but we don't have any action.

(1500)

Today, the government has opportunity to put on the table the legislation. No reason, no matter what the agenda, they could have done that, but they chose not to. Today the opportunity exists to debate that important legislation, but what does the government choose to do? They government chooses that we should be debating a change to the legislative rules.

Significant, significant in this province, agreed by all members on every side of the House, is a debt crisis facing Saskatchewan farmers. We could be dealing with that today, Mr. Speaker. The government has introduced its legislation. We have indicated over and over and over again we are prepared to debate that legislation. We are prepared to debate any estimate the government wishes to bring forward. What are we delivered on a daily basis? Day after day in this House we are delivered the motion that would seek to unilaterally change the rules in this House.

Mr. Speaker, in my judgement there are very few if any people beyond this little island of arrogance across from us who would see this as the most important issue for their legislators to be debating. And, Mr. Speaker, if this government will come to its senses, will listen to what the people of the province are saying just once, they will know that their ... they want their government to move

forward.

They may not like the agenda of the government, and goodness gracious, most don't in this province, but at least they say to this government: move forward with your agenda; propose what you're going to propose; let's see what you're going to do; let's see you come through with some of the promises you made in your throne speech. We're already at day 53.

Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to be here a long, long, long time — a long time — to debate the important issues facing the people of this province. This issue, this motion which we are debating now is, in my view, totally inappropriate because it is being done at the exclusion of so much, so much government business.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite are calling for a vote. Mr. Speaker, I tell you, I tell you, I will not this day, nor at any future day, vote for the privatization of SaskPower.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — And, Mr. Speaker, when the member calls for a vote, I assure him that across this province others are calling for a vote. They want a vote on the future of this government as soon as possible in the next election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — And that for sure would settle this issue, Mr. Speaker. That for sure would settle this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend some time proposing . . .

The Speaker: — The member from Prince Albert-Duck Lake — why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Lautermilch: — I'd like to ask for leave to introduce some guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to members of the House, a group of 24 students from my home area, from Prince Albert, from St. Michael's School. We have with us today 24 grade 6 students from St. Michael's, and I'd like to welcome them to the legislature.

Along with them are their teacher, John Forget, chaperons Mrs. Gyoerik, Mrs. Ferchuk, and Mr. R. Krammer. I would be meeting with them for pictures and drinks later. And I would like to ask all members to welcome them, give them a warm welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTIONS

Amendments to Rules and Procedures of the Legislative

Assembly (continued)

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my colleague from Prince Albert-Duck Lake in welcoming the students here today from St. Michael's School. Welcome to the legislature. I too hope that you enjoy your stay, and I know that you will enjoy your visit with my colleague from . . . the MLA from P.A.-Duck Lake. I know that for a fact.

Students, we are now in the midst of a debate regarding a rule change for the functioning of our legislature. I'm speaking to that, and at the conclusion of my remarks I'm aware that a government member will be standing and debating the issue as well. I am opposing in my remarks . . .

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. It was ruled last week that members of the legislature were not to involve the galleries in the debate. I thought that was the ruling that was stated. If that's the case, I would ask that you bring that to the attention of the hon. member who is just speaking.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — I think the tradition has been in the House, and I've noticed members of the government benches often giving short explanations of what's happening in the House when they're introducing guests. I mean, if we want to change that rule as well, we certainly can. But this has been a tradition in the Assembly, and I'm not sure why the Minister of Finance is upset about it. It seems to me explaining what the debate is about to the students is an important part of democracy. But if you want to change that rule as well, you've got the majority to do it, obviously. But I think it's a good idea for members on either side to give short explanations of what's happening in the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. I believe the . . . I would just reply to the issue which the Minister of Finance has raised. As I indicated last week when a similar issue arose, that at that time I said I didn't feel it was a good idea to involve our guests with the debate in the House, and that applies to members from both sides of the House, of course, and I say that today. We saw kind of an altercation take place last week because of it, and there's a potential for one today. Perhaps if hon. members would just speak to each other and just allow our guests to listen, they will get the explanation that we're trying to give them.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I know that during the visits with MLAs — and that means MLAs on all sides — outside the House, MLAs will have an opportunity to discuss the House with the students, and I'm sure that's going to happen this afternoon. I'm sure of that.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend some time in this debate, because I have said consistently from the beginning of my remarks, I have indicated over and over again that I see this motion to be inappropriate and wrong, and so I feel some responsibility to bring to the House what I would see as an appropriate way for us to go

in this situation; what I would see as being the appropriate way that rules could be changed. And by appropriate I mean maintaining the long tradition that has been part of this legislature and, to my knowledge, all legislatures in our Commonwealth and British parliamentary system. I feel some responsibility to do that, Mr. Speaker.

I have said over and over again that I think this motion is inappropriate for a variety of reasons, and therefore I feel it's somewhat incumbent upon me to describe to you, sir, and to the House, to other members, what I would see as an appropriate way to deal with this issue. Obviously, if we're ever going to get on to the important work of government business, something must be done, Mr. Speaker, and again I would appreciate some response from members opposite when they enter this debate. I'm optimistic. I have confidence in some members opposite, Mr. Speaker; I have confidence — some. I have less confidence in the front bench, I must say, but certainly some in the back bench, I think, are reasonable, are reasonable members and do want to see the work of this House proceed.

Mr. Speaker, obviously we will have our political differences, but I hold some members opposite, particularly in the back bench, in some regard. And I would hope that they will enter the debate and respond to the kind of proposals that I hope to make and that other members in the House have made; indeed, a proposal not unlike that proposal made by their own Minister of Justice in this House.

There is nothing radical or newsworthy in what I am about to propose, Mr. Speaker. Simply I would propose that a committee of legislative members from both sides of the House — two or three from that side now . . .

An Hon. Member: — Why did you turn it down the first time?

Mr. Calvert: — You see, the minister from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg says, why did we turn it down. He knows we did not turn it down. He knows we sat down with his Minister of Justice and then it was his Minister of Justice who pulled it. He knows that. Why does he consistently say these things from his seat? Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to have that member — he's a new member — to sit on the committee. He could bring up a fresh perspective as a new member. I'd be happy to see him sit on the committee.

Mr. Speaker, the proposal is simply that we establish a committee of members from both sides. That's been the tradition in past.

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Just allow the member to continue with his remarks.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would propose that that committee of members could begin — including the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg if the government saw fit to make him a member of the committee — I would propose that that committee could begin meeting during the session. I would propose that it should meet outside of the session

to escape what I've pointed out earlier as what I've described the heat of the battle, that this is not really the appropriate time to be making final decisions on rules. I propose it could meet during the session. I propose it could meet then following the session, intersessionally.

And after a process of meeting, of reviewing the rules of other assemblies in Canada and across the Commonwealth, the process of discussion . . . and I would propose also in a process of public hearings, that the people of the province could have some input to what happens in this . . . Well again the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg finds that amusing. He finds it amusing that we might hold public hearings on rule changes to the legislature. So that not only, I guess, are the opposition not supposed to have a role in rule changes, but the public also are not supposed to have a role. The only people in the province I guess who have the ability to deal with rules in this House are sitting across from us.

Mr. Speaker, the island of arrogance speaks again. The Devine government quote from the Swift Current *Sun* . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I ask the hon. member not to use other member's names.

Mr. Calvert: — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize. I should have said prior to that: I would like to again quote the Swift Current *Sun* in their editorial when they entitled the editorial and describe this group of men and women as, "The Devine government shows its contempt." That's from the Swift Current *Sun*, Mr. Speaker, a direct quote. Those are not my words.

We see that kind of contempt when members opposite will laugh at the suggestion that a legislative committee might hold a small number — I wouldn't anticipate a large number — but a small number of public hearings in the province. Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's unreasonable. That's what I would propose, that kind of committee.

And, Mr. Speaker, to deal with — yes, to deal with the matter of the ringing of the bells. Fair enough, that's a rule of the Assembly. And in my view, a legislative committee should have the free rein to look at all of the rules, not to single out just one, but to have the freedom and the responsibility — not only the freedom, but the responsibility — to review all of the rules that affect the functioning of this place, and to do it not just as a knee-jerk reaction to a certain political event of the day, but to do it over a longer period of time and to give it the kind of consideration that rule changes deserve.

Mr. Speaker, if that committee were established, I believe it needs to be guided, it needs to be guided by a number of principles, as any group that will be set out to do a job should be guided. In this case, there are four principles that I would support for that committee, and that in fact we as a caucus have supported through our own study and consideration of this matter.

I would propose, and we would propose, that such a legislative committee, formed of members from both sides, that one of the guide-lines and one of the principles should be that the work of the Legislative Assembly

should be made more accessible to the public. That would be a guide-line. The question of bell-ringing, the question of the length of question period, the sitting hours, television coverage — all of those rules that affect us then would be judged.

(1515)

Proposed changes or amendments, or a proposal not to amend or change, would be judged in light of a guide-line, number one, that would say the work of the Legislative Assembly should be made more accessible to the public. And if a committee were established, a committee of members from both sides, as they met and looked at the rules, I would suggest that should be a guide-line that they should consider. And if involved with public hearings and involving the people of our province . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I think the hon. member expresses opinions on other factors which may be taken into consideration regarding rules, and he's gone on at some length, and I have allowed him to do that. However, we aren't discussing rule committees and what they could possibly be doing, and public hearings and all those sorts of things. In an extended way they could be related but we really are discussing rule 33(1), and that should be the main focus of your argument.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the main focus of my argument is that I oppose the motion that is before the House because I view it to be inappropriate. I view it to be inappropriate because, one, it is unilateral. It is being done unilaterally; it is being rammed through by the majority government without the consultation of the opposition; therefore, I see it as inappropriate.

And, Mr. Speaker, I view it as inappropriate because it seeks to achieve a political goal. I feel it incumbent upon myself as a member of this legislature, if I'm going to describe some proposal of the government as inappropriate and wrong, I feel some responsibility, as a member, to indicate what I would view as an appropriate way to go. Mr. Speaker, that's hopefully the direction I'm taking now, and with your indulgence would like to pursue.

I said earlier in my remarks that I see this as an inappropriate motion because it just deals with one aspect of the rules. And if we are, as members, going to change the rules of this House, then surely let's look at the whole package. Let's not just separate one; let's look at the whole package, the process and the procedure, the process and the procedure of rule changes.

Mr. Speaker, in my view and in the view, I must say, of my caucus, there are a number of rules, and I don't need to outline all that we have outlined in past, but there are certainly a number of rules that we think would be appropriately discussed if we're going to make a rule change regarding bells.

Because if, in fact, the rule change regarding bells is made, then obviously the opposition — and this is any opposition, not just our opposition, because governments do have a way of changing, and we expect a change in

this province. If the bell-ringing rule is changed and if bell-ringing, as the motion proposes, is limited to one hour, then that's going to affect an opposition, this opposition, and all future oppositions.

Therefore, I think it is important that if that is under consideration that we correspondingly be looking at rule changes that can strengthen the role of the opposition. Obviously, a reduction of that ability to ring bells, and in that way to stand firm against a government, although it's done only with great political risk, if we're going to sacrifice that to this opposition and every other future opposition, then surely we need to be looking at rule changes that could strengthen the role of opposition.

Mr. Speaker, if someone argues against that, then again I say it's only those who think that opposition has no significant role to play in a democratic society.

So therefore I would propose, Mr. Speaker, that the legislative committee that should be established and could be established, it could be established very quickly and get to work very quickly. I propose that this legislative committee, in addition to simply reviewing the bell rules, as the motion would have us do, then let this committee also look at the matter of the daily question period.

If we are sacrificing something by the removal of bells, then obviously a strengthening of the opposition could be an extension of the daily question period, and by that I mean an extension in time. It's my understanding that we have one of the shortest, maybe the second shortest daily question periods in the country. That does limit the number of questions an opposition can put to a government. To strengthen the role of the opposition, to make the government more accountable, and therefore to give the public more access to the working of the legislature, a lengthened question period, in my view, would be appropriate. I see that as being an issue that would be appropriately discussed in a legislative committee that would be set up to review the rules; that committee being set up in place of the kind of motion that we now have before us.

Mr. Speaker, in my view, if the government of this day wishes to limit and hobble the opposition of this day and, therefore, every other opposition — and they should recognize that any rule changes made now they will need to live with when they are on this side of the House, and that will come sooner than later, Mr. Speaker.

So it would seem to me only natural that members opposite would want to look at a broader package of rule changes, and if we're going to limit their opportunity to be in opposition in the future, then they would also be interested in strengthening their role as opposition in the future. Surely the role of an opposition would be made stronger and the functioning of the entire legislature would be made better if, in fact, there was public notice of government business.

It's my understanding, Mr. Speaker — and I've learned this from attendance at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association — it's my understanding that in the British House of Commons, the government order of business is published on a Friday for the next week in its

entirety. And that is provided to each member of the House of Commons in Great Britain by priority post, or whatever system they use, to be sure that that agenda is delivered to all members.

Could we not, Mr. Speaker, in this House have something of a similar nature, a posting of what the government intends to do at least for more than 15 minutes in advance? Mr. Speaker, that kind of rule change, I submit, should be part of consideration by a legislative rules committee that can be made up of members from both sides; that can — yes, indeed should — look at the question of bell-ringing, but that also should be looking at other issues; for instance, the question period, publishing of the government's order of business in an orderly way.

This committee that I propose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to the issue raised by this motion, the issue of bell-ringing, it seems to me should also be mandated to look at perhaps the creation in this House of a ministerial response time.

Currently, as you well know, in the House, if a minister takes notice of a question, that minister then will return perhaps the next day, perhaps the next day, or it may take many days. But at some point that minister will usually come back to the House and, during a future question period, will give response to the question of which he or she took notice of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you well know, that uses valuable minutes in a question period, therefore limiting the number of questions an opposition can ask . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. The member is getting into specific issues outside of the motion that's before the Assembly. It certainly is relevant to relate from time to time to other rules, but not to get into specific rule changes, other rule changes. So I'd ask the member to keep his comments to the motion before the Assembly, which is . . . or the procedure of changing rules, and the question before the Assembly is rule 33(1).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my . . . My opposition to this motion is indeed much related to the process by which it's been brought into this House, the timing of this resolution in the heat of battle. My objection to the motion is that it comes with partisan political motives. I don't think there's much argument about that, even from government members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is the process that I am concerned about. I do feel it incumbent upon me to suggest what I would view as a better process. And I appreciate your remarks that this is not a time to be in detailed specific, and I will endeavour to heed your ruling.

I will like to make the point, Mr. Speaker, with your permission, that we should not be simply debating one rule. We should not be simply debating one rule, a change of that rule which will obviously hobble this opposition and oppositions in the future.

And if we're going to be taking from the ability of this

opposition, and every future opposition, the ability to do what is their role in our parliamentary system and in our democratic society, then at the same time I would argue we should be considering rule changes that at the same time strengthen the opposition. If we're going to be weakening the opposition with one rule change, then at the same time we ought to be looking at rule changes that will strengthen opposition.

And for the life of me, I don't know why members opposition would want this rule to go through, knowing full well that they're going to be over here next time around.

There are a variety of ways that opposition can be strengthened. I've suggested today an extended question period. I've suggested today a ministerial response time in the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the committee also, not just in strengthening the opposition, but in the total functioning of the legislature, is it not possible that we could make better use of our time in Regina when the House is sitting, in terms of sitting hours.

I know that in the negotiations that did happen when the Minister of Justice proposed what I am now proposing today, I know that in those negotiations a variety of issues were raised. I know that he proposed looking at other rules, including sitting hours and so on. That's the appropriate way, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I ask members opposite when they enter this debate to say why, why is the proposal made by the Minister of Justice, why now is that not an acceptable proposal to members opposite? What has changed, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What has changed?

It was on May 11 in this House that the Minister of Justice, not a member of the opposition, it was the Minister of Justice who said, I am concerned about the concept of the rule changes being introduced this way.

He was lifting that very same concern that we have lifted, that I have lifted, that rules are being changed unilaterally. The Minister of Justice understands what's happening here and what kind of a precedent can be set by this kind of motion, should it pass. The Minister of Justice said:

I am still concerned about this concept of the rules changes being introduced (in) this way.

He expressed concern about what he was doing and what his government was doing, and so he went on. He said:

And before I take my place, I make this point to the hon. members. If the opposition will stand in their place and say that the major concern they have is the process; the concern that they have with this issue is the process, then I ask them to do that. And if process is what is wrong with this action today (and he obviously says there's something wrong with what they're doing, he says), I invite the hon. member to (ask to) adjourn (he said, to adjourn) this debate, (and) 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.

(1530)

The Minister of Justice was, in essence, proposing very little different than what I propose today and others from this side of the House have proposed. He said — this is on May 11, Mr. Deputy Speaker — he said:

(And) I offer that challenge to the members opposite if they are interested, Mr. Speaker, in the tradition, primarily, (and) in the process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are interested. We are interested in the process of rule change in this House, and if that is not clear now, I don't know how it can be made more clear.

And we are interested in the tradition of change, the tradition that goes back, according to my colleague from Rosemont who in his remarks around this debate brought to us a wealth of education and information regarding change in the parliamentary system and in the achievement of democratic rights for people, Mr. Deputy Speaker — I understand that democratic and parliamentary change began as early as 1347.

And the long, long tradition, and the only tradition in this legislature, to my knowledge, the only tradition in this legislature is for the very thing that the minister proposes.

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

Mr. Johnson: — I'd like to have leave to introduce a gallery full of guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We do have a gallery full, and they're in the Speaker's gallery. They're from the P.J. Gillen School in Esterhazy, something like 60 grade 5's and 13 grade 4's, for a total of 73. With them today of course are their teachers, Doreen Haubrich and Randy Schramm and Bill Brand. And it might be worthy to mention that, I believe — and I stand to be corrected — but Doreen and Randy and Bill have come to visit the legislature every year since I've been elected, and we always look forward to having them here. The chaperons are Sandra Helmecei and Heidi Zoller — I hope that's right — Darlene Neilson and Lois Steciuk, Marilyn Yankee and Megan Anderson. Their bus drivers are Joanne Heindrich and Beatrice Stevenson.

I will be able to meet with you later on for drinks, and we're going to have some pictures. And then we'll have a little visit outside, if the sun's still shining, and then you can be on your way home. So I'd like all the members to wish them a safe trip back to Esterhazy, and thank you for letting me introduce them to you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTIONS

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

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and without any remarks to the gallery, may I just be permitted to say a word of welcome from the opposition side, particularly because my nephew attends the same school. So I want to welcome the students from Esterhazy today.

Mr. Speaker, on May 11, which is now approaching a month ago, almost month ago, the Minister of Justice in this House proposed essentially what I am proposing this afternoon, that a committee be established, a legislative committee, and he did that on the basis of saying that he was concerned, concerned about the precedent, concerned about the practice of instituting a rule change unilaterally. And he knows.

The Minister of Justice has been in this House for a significant number of years and he understands, he understands the functioning of this House. He understands opposition. He understands that rule changes, if they are to be effective, require negotiation, discussion, and understanding, and he's concerned that that tradition is being violated. He said so in this House on May 11. And he said further . . . Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the *Hansard* of May 11. This is the Minister of Justice. He said:

And I offer that challenge to the members opposite. If they are interested, Mr. Speaker, in the tradition, primarily, and in the process, Mr. Speaker, they will take up that option. If they reject it, Mr. Speaker, then that is saying to me, no, we want to maintain the vehicle, the vehicle of obstructionism by bell-ringing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we said very clearly, the Leader of the Opposition later that day indicated very clearly that we would give this offer of the Minister of Justice — and offer it was — a very serious consideration, he said on that Thursday. He requested that we be given the weekend as a caucus to review the proposal. I don't think it seemed to anyone at that time to be an unreasonable request. I am aware that some discussions did happen early in the course of the next week, but then by Thursday of that week — and it's beyond me what happened in the government cabinet or in the government caucus — something happened, and by the Thursday of that next week the offer was withdrawn, the offer was withdrawn, and has put us then into this rather extended debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again I wish to make the point that one of the tragic consequences of this debate, one of the tragic consequences of this debate is that we are debating this issue at the exclusion of other important issues, other important business that should be discussed in this legislature daily, since that Wednesday or Thursday back

in May when the offer was rejected.

Almost on a daily basis, with the exclusion of private members' day on Tuesday when the opposition gets to set the agenda, the government has decided that the most important issue facing the Government of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan is to get a rule change through the provincial legislature. They have said that day after day after day after day, by introducing this agenda.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have said from this side of the House, day after day, that we are more than willing and more than ready to move on to other issues, to deal with substantive issues facing agriculture in our province, facing environment, facing small business, facing the needs of families. And therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to emphasize that point, I am prepared now to see this House move on to another issue, an issue of the government's choosing, be it the estimates for the Department of Social Services or a Bill to protect the environment, interim supply Bill to . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. The member is tediously repetitious in naming other specifics that we should be getting into. The question before the Assembly is rule change of rule 33(1), and the member is continuously bringing specifics into his speech. So I will ask him again to refrain from that and refer him to rule 25(2):

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

So I wanted to read that to you and warn you again that the member is straying from the topic.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I and all members in this House would like to see us move on to deal with other important issues. And I want to give members opposite the opportunity right now, right now in the middle of a Thursday afternoon, to move on to something else.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that this debate now be adjourned.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion negatived.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I can't say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have a great deal of pleasure today in entering this debate. Normally one welcomes the opportunities to get on their feet and speak in this legislature, particularly those of us on the government side who aren't a minister of the Crown.

I had thought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that upon the House reconvening this spring, that debate and voting on a rule such as . . .

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Moose Jaw South moved an adjournment motion which was defeated, and I agree it was defeated although there was no standing vote on it. He then rose again instantly to resume the debate. And I understand how it's possible that you may have missed him, although it would be unusual if you didn't check to see whether he wanted to speak again.

But I wanted you to check the record and see whether or not he shouldn't have been given the opportunity. Seeing as he had been on his feet, it would be obvious that he may want to get back into the debate, having moved an adjournment motion that was defeated, I just wonder if you'd check whether or not the member from Moose Jaw South should not be allowed to continue the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. The point of order is well taken, but the member did not indicate quickly enough that he wanted to get into the debate.

Order, order. Order. And now the member from Thunder Creek has been recognized. The debate continues.

An Hon. Member: — On another point of order.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — You've indicated that he did have the right to speak again. The fact is that he was on his feet — I watched very closely — in advance of the member from Thunder Creek.

I wonder, under those circumstances it seems to me that the Speaker should have — although I can't argue with your ruling — but it would seem obviously that one of our members has been cut off of an opportunity to speak when he wanted to.

Does that mean that he will be able to get back into the debate at a later time? Or is he just being cut off by the Speaker, arbitrarily by the Speaker, even though everyone I think here would realize that he was on his feet and wanted to get back into the debate?

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. He was not arbitrarily cut off by the Chair. He didn't rise as quickly as the member from Thunder Creek. The member from Thunder Creek has been recognized. He does not have another opportunity to get back into the debate.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems that . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — As much over the last couple of weeks of debate the members of the opposition have implored people from the government side to rise in this debate, they have insisted on taking a great portion of the time allowed for debate in this particular House. And it seems that even though they deny on rule 33(1) that a filibuster is in place, I would say the evidence exhibited in this

legislature does in fact say that on rule 33(1) we are in the midst of a filibuster.

It's very important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when we're talking about this particular Bill, the bell-ringing Bill, that we look at what has happened in other areas of Canada and other jurisdictions. And it was very interesting last week to listen to the comments of some of the members opposite as they ran through a long and lengthy and sometimes very boring dissertation on British parliamentary development and history and their interpretation thereof of the last 900 years of history.

And it's very strange, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we went through the various kings and parliaments and talked about all these things, that when we get to 20th century Canada and what we in our country consider to be some of the most progressive parliamentary legislatures and parliament in the entire Commonwealth of Nations, that by common assent of the members of those particular institutions, eight out of ten provinces and the Parliament of Canada have determined amongst themselves that long drawn-out bell-ringing episodes serve no special function for the taxpayer of that particular jurisdiction.

(1545)

And I would suppose those various legislatures having gone through experiences not unsimilar to the one which we witnessed here where the opposition left this legislature for 17 days, meant that rule changes like 33(1) were necessary in those particular jurisdictions.

It was also interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we talk about a rule change such as this and why it's necessary, we feel, to bring this legislature in line with what we believe the taxpayer of this province wants, we think about those other situations that precipitated the walk-outs referred to by the members opposite.

And in none of those cases, to my knowledge, was the Bill presented by the government of the day ever denied the opportunity of first reading. And I think that's a very important point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we're talking about the democratic process and rule changes.

Members opposite have said that this government is very undemocratic in its application of this particular rule change. And I believe that when members of an opposition can walk out on a particular Bill before that Bill is presented, they have perhaps done one of the most undemocratic things that can be done in the British parliamentary system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Because it is one thing to walk out on an omnibus energy Bill which was laid out to the public of Canada and ask that it be split into smaller parts — and I admit that was done by Progressive Conservatives; it is one thing to walk out on a language Bill in the province of Manitoba — and once again I admit that was Progressive Conservatives, but at least the people of those particular jurisdictions had the opportunity to look at and assess that particular piece of opposition in its full breadth before those actions took place. And I believe that the members

of the opposition in Saskatchewan didn't have the least thought of democracy in mind at all when they walked out and precipitated that 17-day absence from this legislature.

I don't think it had a whole lot to do with democracy at that particular point in time. And I have some reasons to believe this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which I hope you'll bear with me as I lay out before this legislature, and I think they're integrally tied to rule 33(1).

Number one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, prior to the introduction, or the attempted introduction of the SaskEnergy Bill that precipitated this particular walk-out that we talk about, we had the instance of the member from Elphinstone on a public stage with one of the well-known labour leaders in this province telling the public of this province, shortly after the throne speech, that they would make this province ungovernable.

And I suppose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, taken in the context of that evening, and it maybe didn't mean a whole lot to some people in this province, but taken in the context of walking out of this particular legislature prior to the introduction of a piece of legislation, prior to the public having a full purview of it, that particular pronouncement, to me, takes on more meaning. And I think it should take on more meaning to everyone in this province because we had the example of a publicly elected official and also an official elected by union members saying, prior to the introduction of any legislation in this session, that this province would be ungovernable. And I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is absolutely unforgivable.

I have another instance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which I think points to the hypocrisy of the arguments made by the opposition in this particular debate. And I know at times it has been more than difficult for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the Speaker, to keep members opposite on the straight and narrow as far as debating this legislation, and they've often veered off into areas such as SaskEnergy and some of the other Bills that will be debated in this legislature; and you and I know full well that members opposite, when they were government of this province, certainly made provisions for, if not public pronouncements, as to what they would do with some of the Crown corporations in this province. And we've all heard in this legislature those arguments put forward.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it really flies in the face of reality today in our province when members opposite can walk out of this legislature on a Bill that was not allowed to be introduced, and yet members who occupy the front rows over there made provisions, as members of the treasury benches in the previous government, to do many of the same things that we've been debating in this legislature this spring.

And for members opposite to say that this government is hypocritical in introducing a rule change like rule 33(1), in the face of hypocrisy like that, I really wonder if some member opposite can go back through those piles of British parliamentary history books and please find me an instance in that 900 years of development that gives them leave to do the things that have been done this spring,

because I certainly haven't heard them.

A member yesterday from the opposition made an observation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this government does not listen to the members opposite, that we are dictatorial, that we don't allow freedom of speech, and certainly if this particular rule change takes place, that the ability of the opposition to have freedom of speech will be totally nullified.

And they say, where is this government, where has this government ever taken one suggestion from the members opposite and put it into force of law, into a Bill, into a rule change in this particular legislature? How do you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, put into law ideas from people who say they will make this province ungovernable?

And when you do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, talk about things which members opposite, when they sat on the treasury benches of that NDP government prior to 1982, talked about share offerings in public utilities in many of the Crown corporations in this province. And the documents are there to prove it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We talk about those very items, and suddenly we become undemocratic and we precipitate a walk-out of the legislature of Saskatchewan for 17 years.

An Hon. Member: — Seventeen years!

Mr. Swenson: — Or 17 days. I'm sorry. And I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the depth of hypocrisy.

I heard one of the members opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in referring to rule 33(1), that this government was acting like a bully-boy, and proceeded to say this over and over again through his speech in this legislature. And I believe it was the member from Fairview. And I would say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the bully-boy is on that side of the legislature.

Those are the people who talk about making a province ungovernable; those are the people who combine with people in our society to go out and tell untruths, if you will, about certain pieces of legislation.

I find it unfortunate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when members opposite can walk out of this legislature, go out amongst the people of this province on a campaign of innuendo, envy, and fear, and then come back in here and don't want to do the business of the province of Saskatchewan, that they then accuse this government of being a bully-boy. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you listened to what was said during that 17 days, you know what I have said is true.

I also had it said that we are bringing in this particular rule change so that we can help the big-shot friends of the Conservative Party. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a member from a large rural riding, I take special affront to that because I don't know who the big, bad friends of the Conservative Party happen to be in my riding. They seem to be all people who farm and live in small communities like myself. I don't see any great wealthy entrepreneurs in Thunder Creek riding who have something to gain by this government changing the rules on bell-ringing.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you look all around this legislature, particularly on the government side, you will find riding after riding like that where there are no people out there who are going to take special advantage of the fact that this legislature is changing the rules on bell-ringing.

And I think the people out there who are represented by and large by members on this side of the House, appreciate the fact that this government is saying it is time to get on with the business of this House, and that if we have to have some change in the rules to stop members opposite from walking out of this legislature every time someone pulls their chain, then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think those people would applaud us.

Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even though the members opposite say no, we won't do it again, we won't walk out of this legislature again on other particular pieces of legislation, can you really trust a group of people, a political party which has said, prior to any legislation being introduced in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, said by their House Leader and said on a public platform, we will make this province ungovernable.

If the members opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have no ideas to put forward as an alternative government in this province except to make the province ungovernable, how could this government in good conscience take anything those people suggest and put it into law or rule changes? That would be ludicrous.

Debate in this legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has not been limited. In my four years here, I have not seen the use of closure. The use of closure in other parliamentary jurisdictions in Canada, I'm told, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is quite common, is used in the federal House. Members in this legislature have never seen closure, to my knowledge. They have never seen members walk out for 17 days either.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, members in this legislature have had the utmost freedom to debate whatever legislation has been brought forward. And we, Mr. Deputy Speaker, fully expected debate on each and every item that this government was going to bring into this spring session.

We fully expected debate to the absolute fullest on SaskEnergy, on the reorganization of the potash corporation, on the agricultural Bills. We expected the fullest debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And instead, what we got was a party, an opposition who said, we would rather make the province ungovernable rather than stand in this legislature and debate those particular issues.

(1600)

And as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, and I'm certainly not an expert on the rules in this particular institution, but even with the changes in rule 33(1), which would limit bell-ringing to an hour's time, each and every member of the opposition has the opportunity to propose amendments to any piece of legislation in this legislature. And as such, each member in the opposition could, in effect, propose amendments which would require bell-ringing to the extent of at least one hour.

And I would hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this particular legislature would never get into that forum. But for the members opposite to say that the limiting of the bell-ringing for an hour will shut them off on debate on any particular piece of legislation, is an untruth, because the tools that are available to members of the opposition are still wide and extensive, as they have shown in the debate on this particular rule change.

And in theory, I suppose, Mr. Speaker, we could have 26 hours of bell-ringing, at least on amendments proposed on any particular piece of legislation by members of the opposition. But I don't think they would do that, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think they'd do that for one reason. Because if every member of the opposition proposed an amendment which required a standing vote, which then required an hour's bell-ringing, they would have to stand in this legislature and explain to the people of the province why that was happening.

They would not be able to walk out, they would not be able to walk out of this legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before the legislation was introduced, and go out on their agenda of innuendo, envy, and fear amongst the population without having to come in here and answer for it.

So, Mr. Speaker, some of the arguments, in fact most of the arguments made by members opposite, ring hollow when looked at in the light of the opportunities still available to any member of the legislature to debate in this particular forum.

And I don't fear for a moment, Mr. Speaker, this particular rule change, as some members opposite have indicated that no government lasts for ever and that some day I as a member of this legislature might be placed in the position of opposition. And if that occurred I suppose, Mr. Speaker, I would have to look at my legislative colleagues around this country, people that I've gone to Commonwealth parliamentary conferences with, people that I'm sure you have, Mr. Speaker, in your position — and you've talked about rules of legislatures and how they conduct themselves as elected members and how I would conduct myself as an elected member — having studied and been part of the British parliamentary system of government.

I don't fear this particular rule change 33(1) because members opposite alluded to the fact that we some day might, this party, might be in that particular position.

And I don't think I'm off the topic at all, Mr. Speaker, in referring to those aspects of the particular debate because if people in the rest of Canada feel no fear and do not quake at the thought of having a rule which I believe, Mr. Speaker, was originally intended, in my study of the system, to call members to vote, to call members to their seat to vote, I think there must be other ways, Mr. Speaker, that we can deal with the concerns of the members opposite.

And the member from Moose Jaw South for the last hour and a half has talked about proposed rule changes that he would like to see brought into this legislature, a form of

committee that he would like to see brought in so that we wouldn't have to go through the debate that we have, Mr. Speaker, on rule 33(1).

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. Let's allow the member for Thunder Creek to give his version of the motion under discussion.

Mr. McLaren: — Could I have leave to introduce some guests, please?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McLaren: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to introduce some students from Yorkton, St. Mary's School, grades 3 and 4, and there are 56 students here with us this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to be able to introduce you to the Assembly. They're in your gallery, of course, and they are accompanied today by Glen Tymiak, Mrs. McLashen, Mrs. Murphy, and Miss Krasowski.

We hope you've enjoyed the tour of the building today. We hope you enjoy the proceedings that are going on in the Assembly. And I'd just like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I had the opportunity just a few weeks ago to take part in the official opening of a brand-new expansion to St. Mary's School. They have a new gym now and new class-rooms, and it was really enjoyable for me to be able to take part in that official opening.

So I would ask all members to please help me welcome these students. I'll be meeting with you to have some pictures taken and have some refreshments. And if you have any questions about the Assembly and how it's operating today, I'd be glad to try and answer any questions for you. So please welcome these students from Yorkton.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTIONS

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

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, members opposite both this afternoon and other days, as I said before, made references to the fact that we should be studying rule changes as a whole, rather than rule 33(1) in this particular debate; that this government has not been reasonable and forthcoming when discussing rule changes with members of the opposition.

And as you know, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister of Justice made such a suggestion in this legislature some weeks ago. And the member from Riversdale rose in his place and at quite lengthy dissertation said that yes, maybe that was a good idea.

And I won't bore you, Mr. Speaker, and the other members of the House of going back through that

particular reading from *Hansard*. I believe they've been entered into the record by members from both sides of the legislature, and I suppose each is open to their interpretations of what the member from Riversdale said, but it seemed like a good idea at the time.

And the member from Riversdale said, give us at least the weekend to study the proposals and take it to our caucus. And there was nothing forthcoming, Mr. Speaker, from that suggestion by the member from Riversdale.

And I really wonder, given the attitude of members opposite, if a rules committee by the whole of the legislature is going to achieve the end result, because on the one hand, we've had the House Leader of the Opposition talk about making the province ungovernable; we've had other members lamenting about the fact that the 1986 provincial election did not go as they wished. The fact that they ended up with a few thousand more popular vote and quite a few less seats has meant that they have never really accepted the judgement of the public on October 20, 1986.

So I really wonder if members opposite are serious when they say to the people in this legislature and the people in the province of Saskatchewan, strike a rules committee of all members of this House so that we may talk about reform, about changing the way that we as members operate so that we cover off the democratic rights of all, so that we cover off how we will conduct ourselves in this particular House. Given those two things, Mr. Speaker, I really wonder at the sincerity of the members opposite, because they had a week and the Leader of the Opposition only asked for four days.

So I say to them: what do you need? Do you need two weeks? Would that be reasonable? I don't know. I'm only one of those back-benchers that you so . . . those so often referred to by members opposite.

But I say to the members opposite, if they are really serious about it, and the member from Quill Lakes who sits in the front bench and who has obviously taken part in these negotiated things in his previous years in this legislature, I say to him: give us a time. Do you need two weeks? Do you need three? What do you need if you're serious about reforming the rules of this legislature? You say the rule 33(1) is undemocratic, it's unacceptable. The Leader of the Opposition said, give me four days and had over a week and nothing was forthcoming.

It's time members opposite, Mr. Speaker, stood in their place when they're debating rule 33(1) and said, we are ready in this time frame to come forward and amend the rules of this legislature to make all members happy. But as I say, Mr. Speaker, given some of the past history and the past comments of members opposite, I doubt very much if that is going to take place.

In winding up my arguments, Mr. Speaker, I too would just like to refer to *Hansard*, May 11, 1989, and read one particular sentence which I think all members of this legislature must keep in mind when debating things such as rule 33(1), and this was by the hon. member from Riversdale, the Leader of the Opposition. And he finishes the one paragraph by saying, Mr. Speaker:

But we should respect always, always, that the people, at the end of the day, are right, through mandates. That's what we should respect.

And I would hope all members, Mr. Speaker, would think of that as they debate this motion in the legislature.

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I look at and listen to the remarks of the member for Thunder Creek, and particularly his closing remarks about democracy and the fact that when the people speak they are always right, that really is at the heart of democracy.

I think there's a sense, Mr. Speaker, in which the kind of debate that we've been having on this motion 33(1) in some respects could be said to be rather silly; in other respects, the other side of the coin is it's far from that. It's a very fundamental rule to the proceedings of this House, very fundamental to the whole of the parliamentary tradition that the *demos*, the people, as the root word for democracy would have it, always have the *kratia*, the power. That's what the root meaning of democracy is: *demos kratia*, the people ruling.

(1615)

And if we're talking about this particular rule 33(1) in this Assembly that provides for the bells to ring for only one hour, then that severely curtails the ability of the people to rule. Because if and when it comes to an issue like SaskPower and the bells can only ring for one hour, calling attention to the seriousness of this issue, then in fact it's very difficult, if not impossible, for the people to get the facts about what this legislature and about what the government is doing, in one hour. And if they can't get that information and be informed and make their decision on this issue, it's impossible for them to have their say and to have their rule even within this parliamentary system, this representative system.

And that's why this side of the House opposes this rule to limit the ringing of the bells, because it will restrict the access and the opportunity for the public at large to deal with issues of public concern. And that is fundamental to the parliamentary system, the democratic system that we have come to know in this country. This is a very fundamental issue even though there, at points, are a lot of silliness going on in this particular House during the debate of it.

And so, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I would like to share a number of reflections on the nature of the democratic process as it pertains to rule 33(1), and the ability of the people to have power or influence or rule according to the root meaning of the word democracy.

Now the member from Thunder Creek, in his opening remarks, Mr. Speaker, was talking about using this motion about the bell-ringing to bring in legislation that the public wants. And implicit in what he was saying, and in fact he said it explicitly, was that if we could get beyond this silly motion about bell-ringing, we could get on to more substantive matters of public business.

And perhaps there's a certain logic to that, but as you

yourself know, that's precisely what didn't happen twice this afternoon after question period, when the government refused to deal with orders for the day, its own legislation; when we had a question period that talked about the need for the government to bring forth promised environmental legislation on ozone depletion, depletion of the ozone layer, and other legislation on the taxing of environmentally unfriendly products.

Those are government orders that should be brought forth for the public benefit, and aren't being brought forth because of this silly rule change that the government proposes to limit debate for one hour, or limit the bells ringing to one hour.

And again this afternoon, for a second time, the member for Moose Jaw South moved to adjourn debate just within the last half hour or so, so that we could in fact get on to more substantive business, public business. And that too was refused by the government opposite.

And this is a cause then for concern, as I say, that we seem to be stuck here debating what in some respects is a very silly, frivolous motion to limit the ringing of the bells for one hour when there is more precious and pertinent public business that we ought to be dealing with. And I think then that if the government is serious, it could well move. It has had a couple of opportunities this afternoon.

The member for Thunder Creek also, just now in his remarks, talks about the opportunity for public input. Well what is a democratic system or a parliamentary system if there isn't public input?

He talked about the fact that when the bells rang in Ottawa for the nationalization . . . the national energy program that the Liberal government brought in, and the Progressive Conservative Party walked out protesting that national energy program legislation and let the bells ring, that that was all right. There was no problem with the bells ringing there because it provided an opportunity for public input.

He also went on to talk about the circumstances in Manitoba when the bells rang over the French language legislation of the Pawley government there. And again said that was all right, that was quite all right for the bells to go on ringing while the Progressive Conservative Party walked out of the Manitoba legislature. In both those instances the bells were ringing when the Conservatives walked out, and it was quite legitimate. And I point out to you, Mr. Speaker, that the ringing of the bells in both these instances was for well over one hour.

So what we have, essentially, is a situation in which the bells are allowed to ring in other jurisdictions for more than an hour when the Progressive Conservative Party walks out or initiates the bell-ringing. And they'll walk out for the big oil companies in Ottawa and they'll walk out against legislation that has to deal with one of the founding nations of this country, and that's quite all right. The member for Thunder Creek calls this walk-out, labels it as being undemocratic.

And I think it's important for us to remember, for us in this Legislative Assembly and for the people of Saskatchewan

at large, to remember that it was Winston Churchill who talked about democracy as being the worst possible form of government, that democracy is the worst possible form of government, until you consider the alternatives.

And that ought to give us all reason to pause and consider the implications of that kind of statement when placed in the context of this motion to limit the ringing of bells to one hour. Obviously for the government members the circumstances of having the bells ring for 17 hours is totally unacceptable. It's more than an inconvenience — certainly more than that. The ringing of the bells for 17 days is more than just an annoyance.

I think that, at heart, what the government is saying, that with 17 days of bell-ringing there's too much democracy. What the government is essentially saying is that this, this 17 days of bell-ringing, is too much democracy. This is the worst possible form of government, until we consider the alternatives, as Winston Churchill says.

The government would have us believe that fundamentally one hour of bell-ringing is sufficient, that the purpose of the bell-ringing is simply to summon the members to vote, and that that can be done in one hour. And that's an annoyance perhaps, and that's an inconvenience perhaps, but when push comes to shove, it guarantees that the government will have its say and rule the day very easily and conveniently in one day.

One hour of bell-ringing guarantees that any debate can be closed in one day, and in that fashion you avoid the unnecessary exercise in democracy . . . In restricting the bell-ringing to one hour, you eliminate the unnecessary exercise of democracy where the public cannot be informed and participate in issues of public concern when the bells are ringing for as long as 17 days. How much more convenient for a government to have the bells ring for only one hour — for only one hour.

It reminds me, Mr. Speaker, of a sort of a television commercial for Spic and Span or some other kind of household cleaner — no fuss, no mess. The government can get on with the job with one hour's worth of bell-ringing — no fuss, no mess, with the democratic process, with the people having a say or a voice or a rule as they ought to have in a democracy when the bells are allowed to ring for six days or 16 days or 17 days as they did this past month here in Saskatchewan.

And I think it's been the validity, Mr. Speaker, and the wisdom in the present rule that the bells are allowed to ring without any set terminus. The wisdom of that logic was proved in the exercise that we saw this past month when they rang for 17 days and the public of Saskatchewan accepted that. It was quite prepared to live with the annoyance and perhaps the inconvenience of the bells ringing for 17 days because of the importance of the matter and the need for public debate to take place within that period of time, for the public to be informed about the privatization of SaskPower over the course of 17 days, for the public to have an opportunity to consult with colleagues at work and friends and neighbours and, yes, even to get together with relatives during the course of those days and to jaw-bone about the merits or demerits of what was happening in the legislature. And

I'm sure that conversations were repeated across this province.

In fact, I was part of many of them, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you were, as to how long should these bells be allowed to continue ringing. Should we have a situation where the bells would ring for only one hour, or maybe two — maybe the government was being a little bit unreasonable with the one-hour limitation — but should there be in essence some limitation, some terminus on the ringing of bells, or should we endure the present situation, the present rules where there were no strictures as to how long they could ring?

And I think that the wisdom of this Assembly over the past years, in forging a tradition that said the bells are allowed to ring without limit, was established quite conclusively this past month over the SaskPower privatization issue, when people said it's not a problem, it's not a problem. It might have been a problem if the bells had been allowed to ring for two or three or four or five more days, such that the government spending allocations would not be able to be brought forth because the legislature wasn't sitting and that then people on social services would be hurt, school boards and hospitals wouldn't have money to pay their employees their wages.

Then that might have been a problem, but there is a corrective in the present rules of this Assembly. There's a built-in corrective built into the democratic process that this Assembly has forged over the years, a corrective that says if any opposition dare go too far with bell-ringing, it will pay a price. And the price that it will pay is the loss of public opinion. That kind of risk, that kind of price to be paid by an opposition, simply isn't part of the scenery when we look at the proposed legislation in front of us, a change to rule 33(1). It simply isn't part of the scenery because it's very difficult, if not impossible, for an opposition to go too far when the bell-ringing is limited to only one hour.

(1630)

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, a circumstance in which anyone would say that the opposition has gone too far, has gone too fast, too far, when the bells ring for an hour? I'm just trying to think of a circumstance where they might say that if we were to have the present proposed rule change implemented. Rare, Mr. Speaker, rare would the case be where the public would say: one hour — that's outlandish. The opposition must be made to pay the price.

There's no corrective, Mr. Speaker, there's no built-in corrective to the present legislation. And I think that's part of the weakness of this proposal then, to change the existing rule regarding bell-ringing, that again, in the wisdom of the parliamentary tradition, those men and women who preceded us and who sat in your chair, it was deemed utterly appropriate to the parliamentary process that the bells should ring without limit. Because then the real price, the political price, would be imposed or paid on an opposition misusing that rule, not by the government, but by the public at large.

And implicit in that, as I've said, is the notion that the

people have the voice or the say or the rule or the power in a democracy; that implicit in the existing provisions for rules on the ringing of bells is the understanding that people will have the say even in disciplining a political party that goes too far in ringing the bells.

And that is really an exercise in democratic faith, to have this kind of proposal before . . . or this kind of rule as the rule of the day with respect to bell-ringing in this Assembly — that the public will rule when it comes to bell-ringing, instead of any Speaker having to make that judgement or any timekeeper having to have a stop-watch timing for one hour to see if an opposition goes too far, stays out too long. There's no need for that with the present provisions.

And if that were to be changed, and if we were to adopt the proposed motion of the member from Kindersley that the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislature Assembly* be amended by changing the second section following rule 33(1) to limit the bell-ringing to one hour, there would be obviously no built-in democratic corrective.

And so I say, Mr. Speaker, that at the root of this bell-ringing motion, at the root of this motion to change the rules of this Legislative Assembly to limit bell-ringing to one hour, at root there is an issue of democratic expression. And I think again of the way in which the ancient Greeks gave rise to democratic expression. They didn't do it just in terms of the root meaning of the word, the *demos* have the *kratia* — the people have the power or the voice.

They did it in practical terms and they took that notion or that democratic ideal from their everyday experience on the street in the *agora*, which was the ancient market-place. And that was the birthplace of democracy where the Greeks said the people shall have the power.

And I think that we see again, implicit in this motion to limit the bell-ringing to one hour, an attempt to take the power or the decision making as it were, out of the *agora*, out of the modern day market-place, out of the public arena, and to put that into this relatively restricted arena of the Legislative Assembly.

And that's precisely why many of the members of this side of the House, in fact a good part of the public, the majority of the public I dare say, consider this motion to limit the bell-ringing to an hour to be fundamentally undemocratic. It takes the democratic process out of the public market-place, out of the modern-day *agora*, and puts it into the rarified atmosphere of this Legislative Assembly.

And when it comes to an issue as important as the privatization of SaskPower, that is precisely an issue that needs to be debated and reviewed and passed judgement on in public. And I say that, Mr. Speaker, precisely because this government had no mandate to privatize SaskPower. That issue was not taken into the public market-place in the last election, and that's why it was necessary to have 17 days — be it so long — to have a full public review and scrutiny and voice, or rule, democratically on that issue, and not to have it bulldozed through this Legislative Assembly by a government that

had a blind privatization agenda.

And so I think we see the logic then . . . the people of Saskatchewan have seen the logic behind the bell-ringing episode demonstrated very clearly to them in the events of the past number of weeks, and have come to, I think, grow in their appreciation of the democratic process, and to see that, contrary to what the member from Thunder Creek would have us to believe, and other members of the government side would have us to believe, that this motion is undemocratic. In fact, it is a logical expression of the democratic ideal that comes all the way from ancient Greece.

And I say that the Saskatchewan people today are inheritors of that ideal and are thankful for this New Democratic Party standing up and speaking for it, speaking for the bells to ring for as long as 17 days if need be. And that there need be no terminus then, no terminus as this proposed motion of Mr. Andrew's . . . excuse me, the member from Kindersley would have us adopt, that there be a limit to only one hour. That's not what the inheritors of the Greek ideal of democracy want today, and they've spoken on that issue.

This party would be standing at 23 or 24 per cent in the polls if the people had not spoken clearly on the issue of SaskPower privatization and the ringing of the bells. That democratic exercise, Mr. Speaker, of the ringing of the bells for as long as it had to happen, validated the democratic process right here in the *agora* of Saskatchewan, and I think we could take some pride in that.

The members on the opposite side have pointed out on a number of occasions that Saskatchewan is one of only two jurisdictions, I believe, that doesn't have some kind of limit on bell-ringing. And that's certainly a good observation, and probably a very pertinent observation. And I think the debate on this subject has been enriched by adding that observation to the mix, the proposition that we in Saskatchewan and, by implication, the people in Ontario, who don't have a limit on bell-ringing in their legislation, that these two legislatures ought to get with it, ought to go with the flow of modern parliamentary procedure and adopt some sorts of strictures which would limit bell-ringing in this jurisdiction and in Ontario.

And while that adds an element of consideration to this debate, and adds an element of interest, perhaps, and is a consideration that might be considered, it has to be measured against the democratic ideal and the parliamentary ideal.

The people on the opposite side of the House, and some of the public as well, talk about this particular legislation as being unprecedented — unprecedented — in addition to being undemocratic, that you really can't have members of the legislature walking out for some 17 days and holding the legislature to hostage.

Mr. Speaker, as you might know, my own training is in theology, and I've done a little bit of reflecting, I must confess not a whole lot of reflecting or searching of the scriptures on the issue of bell-ringing. To my knowledge,

they didn't have any equivalent procedures or rules in any of the *Old Testament* literature, and I think that's not without reason.

And the reason for that is that in both the ancient worlds of the *Old Testament* and in the *New Testament*, there was no notion of democracy, there was no democratic ideal to the people of Israel or the people of the time of Christ, or after, in fact. In fact it's really been said that the post-Christian era facilitated a revival of some of the democratic ideals that sprung out of ancient Greece.

In the *Old Testament* world there was no need for bell-ringing, because in very primitive times you had Moses leading the people of Israel across the Red Sea and through the desert for 40 years — for 40 years, and we're talking about 17 days of bell-ringing here. Moses was responsible only to a council of elders and then ultimately to the people of Israel, but there was no notion of democracy. And of course then there was no thought even of bell-ringing. Now maybe they would have had ceremonial bells in their religious ceremonies. The Ark of the Covenant probably had religious bells. The members opposite who ask what this has to do with the debate could be well informed about some of the contemporary, political, and actually even theological dimensions of this issue.

In later times, after the Israelite people ceased to be a nomad people, wandering, as I said, for 40 years through the deserts, they came to be governed — and this is a dramatic précis of ancient Israelite history, I'm sure you'll understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a dramatic précis of it — they came to be governed by kings. And again in that regard, as far as I am aware, there was no provision for bell-ringing, whether it was for one hour or for 17 days, because the kings had their advisers who were ultimately accountable to them, and the kings bore little accountability to the *demos* or the people of Israel. And there was no semblance then of democracy.

(1645)

As I said it isn't . . . And we could maybe just say a word about *New Testament* times then too. In *New Testament* times there was similarly no provision for any kind of democratic participation. We all know about life in biblical times at the time of Christ, when the Roman Empire ruled, and the Romans ruled with an autocratic, iron hand. And so when it comes to any kind of provision for any kind of public participation, such as that afforded by the motion before us to limit the ringing of bells to one hour, there's no precedent for it; there's no relationship at all to it in terms of that biblical context. And as I said, that's why we have to look to the birthplace of democracy, to ancient Greece. The Greek political institutions . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Rosthern says that he will send a copy of my remarks to I'm not sure who. I'd certainly welcome that. I think that they bear some pertinence. I would say that to the member from Rosthern. And if the member from Rosthern wants to say that I'm a disgrace, I'm prepared . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order, order. Order. Order. Order. Order! I ask the hon. members to please be quiet.

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm prepared to live with the allegations of a disgrace, because the point I want to make is the point about the relevance of democracy to this debate. And where democracy isn't present, and where you have an autocratic kind of society with no democratic ideal, as we do in the Old Testament and the New Testament, we're missing out on a lot — we're missing out on a lot.

And I say, thank God to the ancient Greeks who gave us the democratic ideal; and I say, thank God for the parliamentary tradition that enhances and contemporizes that democratic ideal. And I say, thank God for the wisdom of this Legislative Assembly in previous years that held to a notion of rules for bell-ringing that allowed for full, free ringing of the bells so that the democratic ideal could be upheld and that the people could have their voice.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — And the point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, whether it's in Bible times or in Saskatchewan today, where the people don't have a voice, you don't have a democracy. And that's implicit in this motion of the member from Kindersley to change the rules, and that's why this side of the House is opposing it, is because a rule change of this nature is fundamentally undemocratic.

The Greek political institutions in and of themselves did not survive. But the democratic ideal survived, and that's the ideal that we're addressing ourselves to in this debate. It undergirds everything we're saying. We're dealing with the issue of whether the people will have a voice, will have opportunity to review and address issues critically and constructively if the bells are only going to ring for one hour, or if they have a fuller opportunity when the bells ring full and free, unrestrained as in the existing provisions.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I say if this government, if this present government didn't have privatization at the top of its agenda as top priority, this bell-ringing legislation wouldn't be a priority either. And if you think about it for a while, you have to ask yourself: why else do we have this bell-ringing legislation if it isn't to buttress and amplify the government's insistence to get on with their privatization agenda?

What they're really looking at is the opposite to the Greek ideal of democracy. They're looking at an oligarchy, a notion of a select few calling the shots for the public. They really . . . the government really would disparage the rule of the many, as we find in a democracy. It would insist that the people of Saskatchewan are fundamentally unreliable; that they're fickle; that they're ignorant; that they're irresponsible; that they may even be violent; that heaven only knows what will happen when the bells ring for as long as 17 days or more.

The government would argue that the people of Saskatchewan are capricious and frivolous when it comes to their reviews of the issue, and therefore the government should have full say; that the masses of

people, the great unwashed, are never really up to the task; have never really been taught to understand or appreciate what is right, what is best, what is in their own best interests, and so they can't be expected to pursue that. And what we then have to do is leave the decision making up to the government.

And the ancient Greeks were well aware of this temptation to be preoccupied with order and with structure and with stricture on the expression of public opinion. And there was a constant attention in ancient Greece as to whether you would give expression to this public opinion or whether you would put dampers on it and hedge it in and fence it in and control it out of fear for tyranny.

And I think there were and still are echoes of that attitude when it comes to the motion of Mr. Andrew to limit the bell-ringing. There's a fear that if you have more than an hour's worth of bell-ringing you're going to have tyranny; you're going to have masses of people taking to the streets, perhaps coming to public meetings to protest privatization, and who knows what will issue out of that. And therefore the need to control; therefore the need to restrict the democratic process and hand decision making over to the government unilaterally.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, that this government opposite would love nothing better, would love nothing better than to have public debate closed entirely. The people of Saskatchewan know that by precedent. The people of Saskatchewan who were here after the 1986 election know that it was from October '86 to June '87, almost a year — that it was this government who denied a sitting of the legislature so that there could be no public voice while social programs were hacked and slashed to pieces. And maybe if the legislature had been sitting, maybe then I say, Mr. Speaker, the bells would have rung for more than 17 days while people protested that cruel action.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that if we think about what happened in the spring of '87, that was a violation of the democratic process. There was no accountability built into the present provision for bell-ringing. There is a process of accountability, namely that any government or opposition that violates its own responsibility to monitor if they're going with or against the flow of public opinion, any one opposition that dares violate that will pay the price.

I think also of the way in which this government took more than a year to call the Eastview by-election, the longest wait in Saskatchewan history for a people, a constituency in the province to be represented in democratic fashion, to have their voice in the legislature precluded, unilaterally eliminated because the Premier of the province did not want to call a by-election, did not want to have the democratic process take hold and be implemented after Mr. Martineau resigned.

And I say that's an outrage that the democratic process can be violated for that long, for more than a year, for the whim of the Premier to protect his own political interest.

And we also can recall the omnibus Bill 1 that was

introduced this session, at the beginning of this session, to centralize all political power and to give all unrestricted power to the government, to Executive Council, to privatize fundamentally any agency or department or Crown corporation that it chooses, without any public accountability.

And therein is the need for a motion, for a rule on bells such as we presently have already that says the bell shall ring for as long as the opposition deems to be responsible, and as long, implicit in that, as the public deems to be responsible — that that gives full and free expression to the democratic ideal.

Now another attempt, Mr. Speaker, to . . . This goes so many different directions, but one can see the importance of the present provision to have unrestricted bell-ringing when it comes to an issue such as the privatization of SaskPower, inasmuch as it affects so many people across the province.

If it weren't for the fact that it affects virtually every single person in this province, some — what is it? — 450,000 bill payers, customers of SaskPower, virtually everyone, we could say, well we can afford to do without full and free debate on any given subject, the privatization of SaskPower, for example; we can afford to have a restriction or a constriction of the bell-ringing to one hour. But it touches so many people in so many different ways that it's really quite alarming to consider the implications of not having ample provision for the issues to be discussed.

And I'm thinking, for example, of a letter I just received the other day from His Worship, Mayor John Empey of the city of Estevan, who writes:

The city of Estevan joins other communities in the province in requesting (and he's writing this to the Premier, with a copy to myself) in requesting that your government addresses the provisions of section 43 of Bill 22 pertaining to SaskEnergy.

And he goes on to say:

. . . that the elimination of the grant in lieu (of taxes he means) would have a detrimental effect on the city. And the report prepared by the city of Regina . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order, order. That aspect of the letter does not bear on the topic under discussion.

Mr. Koenker: — Yes, I think you're probably right, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — I think you're probably right, Mr. Speaker. I think the point that he makes is that the privatization of SaskPower will have a detrimental effect. And I think that's why it's so important that there be a full and free debate of the issues surrounding a measure or a move like the privatization of SaskPower so that municipalities can be informed of the impact of these

measures on their own ratepayers . . .

The Speaker: — It being 5 o'clock, the House stands adjourned until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.