

The Assembly met at 8 a.m.

Prayers

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, I would request leave of the Assembly to proceed to government orders today.

Leave granted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Human Resources, Labour and Employment Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 20

Mr. Chairman: — Would the minister introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me today the deputy minister, Gerry Meier, seated to my left. He's just come out of the hospital where he's had oral surgery and therefore he looks a bit like Gainer the Gopher today. But he has dragged himself down here from the surgery and will be here to assist me.

On my left, as the TV cameras view this, is Judy Moore, the assistant deputy minister in the labour division. And directly behind deputy minister Meier is Ron Kruzeniski, assistant deputy minister, Human Resources and Employment division. Beside Mr. Meier, to my left, is Pat More, a senior financial advisor in support services division. Natalia Carroll is behind me. She's the executive director of the support services division. Also with us are Joan Greaves, director of the women's branch, Anne McFarlane, employment opportunities; and Dave Argue, director of labour relations. We have other officials available today should they be required.

Item 1

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I've sent across a list of standard questions related to staffing, advertising, travel, including both yourself and staff within your department, as well as polling. If it's acceptable to you, I would accept a written response to those in the interest of time in the Assembly today.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well thank you. I just handed the list to my officials. They're going to fill in the blanks for you and I'll send it over. They'll fill in the blanks for you and we'll send it over. I may have a few comments on them, but it shouldn't take too long.

I didn't really have an opening statement but I just wanted to maybe state a few sentences with respect to the past year at this particular department. For the most part, the year has not been one of major change. There has been gradual progress. With respect to senior citizens, there has been no change in the programs; they are identical from the prior year. There is one slight sign of improvement with respect to senior citizens in that their incomes have increased this year so that fewer of them

qualified for the \$500 and \$700 heritage grant program. The rules have not changed, but it's an automatic calculation that if your income is over \$30,000 you do not qualify, and if your income is over \$25,000 you qualify for half the amount. We'll have the exact figures available, but seniors' incomes have improved to the extent that fewer have qualified and more seniors are over that income level.

With respect to women's issues. The women's branch has been capably managed by Joan Greaves, and there have been some modest improvements. For example, as we speak today, Mr. Chairman, Saskatchewan has the second lowest unemployment rate for women in all of Canada, and that is second only to the province of Ontario. So we are making progress with respect to women's employment and are working on the other issues. So I wanted to make a few of those opening statements.

Also in the area of labour, it has been a relatively quiet year, not as quiet as one would like with respect to labour relations, but it's been a relatively quiet year. The unemployment rate has remained static or decreased slightly. The contracts that have been negotiated have been done so with less confrontation than in prior years, so we're satisfied that while things could be better, there has been modest improvement in all areas in this department.

I'm very satisfied with the management of the staff in this particular department and I believe that the public has been well served by the officials here today and all of the employees of the department because it's been an uneventful year. And in politics and government, uneventful means that everybody's doing their job.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I trust from your response that I can anticipate responses to the written questions I sent over today during the course of estimates. I'd appreciate that.

Mr. Minister, as we review the mandate of your department and how effectively you're meeting the mandate, have met it in the past year, I suspect that we may find ourselves having the occasional difference of opinion. However, I think, in your opening remarks you may have touched on something where as a matter of fact we do have a common opinion.

The fact of the matter is that I will agree with you that there has been little change within your department and its mandates this past year. And unfortunately I think, Mr. Minister, that that bodes bad news for the people of Saskatchewan, particularly as it relates to some of the big pictures that impact on the people of Saskatchewan in a broad sense.

I'd like to begin a more detailed review, Mr. Minister, of the function of your department and the meeting of its mandates in a number of areas. Let us begin with probably, in most people's mind, the two most important areas of mandate of your department. Let me refer, first of all, to section 4.01 of The Human Resources, Labour and Employment Act, Mr. Minister. And a significant part

of that reflects an increasing problem, many would say and I would concur, a growing crisis in the province of Saskatchewan.

Section 4.01, Mr. Minister, of your Act to define the mandate of your department reads in part, and I quote:

The minister may:

(a) establish and operate any programs and services connected with manpower matters that he considers necessary to provide adequate employment opportunities for residents of Saskatchewan, including programs related to:

(iv) migration of persons into Saskatchewan;

Now, Mr. Minister, if the department has been working hard at reaching this mandate in the past year, in fact in the past four and a half years, I would say that the migration is working in reverse. Clearly that is what the numbers indicate, Mr. Minister, and let me just take a quick review of what's been happening by way of migration in the province of Saskatchewan.

Unfortunately Saskatchewan has not been seen as a place of activity and attractiveness to people in other provinces in our country. And as I take a look at the record over the past years, Mr. Minister, let me just review what's been happening since 1985. And in fact I think it spells out a trend that is getting not better but worse.

In 1985, Mr. Minister, under the PC government of which you are a part, Saskatchewan suffered a net loss of 4,151 people. Let me point out here, that's not 4,151 people who left Saskatchewan; that's 4,151 more who left than chose to come into our province.

Mr. Minister, it's bad enough that we were losing people in 1985, but in 1986 it got worse yet. In 1986 we had a net loss of 7,276 people. The trend got worse and it continued. In 1987 unfortunately the trend continued, Mr. Minister. From Saskatchewan we had a net loss again of 9,983 — nearly 10,000 broken dreams, dashed hopes of the future, representing people who have moved out of the province of Saskatchewan.

Last year, Mr. Minister, we suffered even a greater loss of Saskatchewan people, of our most valuable resource, our people of this province. Last year we had a net loss of 13,346 people. And, Mr. Minister, this year in 1989, already in the first seven months of 1989, we have surpassed the total loss in all of last year. Already in the first seven months, Mr. Minister, we have lost 14,000 — a net loss of 14,639 people.

Mr. Minister, what does that mean? It means that in the past four and a half years, in the past four and a half years Saskatchewan has suffered a net loss of nearly 50,000. And I think if we would roll in the numbers for August to date we would find that we are very, very close, if not in fact, bang on — a net loss of 50,000 people from the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Minister, I don't know about you but it strikes me that that is not meeting a mandate of developing programs related to the migration of persons into Saskatchewan. The migration is in reverse,

Mr. Minister.

(0815)

And what is the impact of that? Let's translate that into reality. When we look at a net loss of 50,000, people what does it mean? It means, Mr. Minister, that Saskatchewan has suffered in the past four and a half years the equivalent to the entire population loss of the following community, if we rolled them all together: Lloydminster, Melfort, your home city of Melville, Assiniboia, Biggar, Carrot River, Carlyle, Davidson, Esterhazy, Gull Lake, Herbert, Indian Head, Kamsack, Kerrobert, Kindersley, Leader, Lumsden, and Meadow Lake.

Mr. Minister, what we have gone through in the past four and a half years is the equivalent of those communities literally dropping off the map of the province of Saskatchewan — every man, women, and child in those communities having vacated Saskatchewan, having given up their citizenship in our fair province — Mr. Minister, 50,000 people representing dashed hopes and failed dreams.

Mr. Minister, no matter how you look at it, whether you look at it over the past four and a half years, whether you look at it over the past couple of years, whether you look at it on a month by month basis, consistently there has been a constant trend in the province of Saskatchewan in that we have been losing our most valuable resource, our most valuable energy form in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister — our people.

And so I simply ask you, I ask you to give me an explanation, an explanation as to just why this is going on. Clearly your department is mandated to deal with the exercise of migration, preferable in-migration as it's laid out in your department, but we've got it going in reverse. Clearly, it is the mandate of your department to understand why it is happening. And so I ask you, Mr. Minister, to explain to this House and to the people of Saskatchewan why it is that Saskatchewan is suffering that dramatic crisis of loss of people from our province.

And I ask you as well, Mr. Minister, to not give me the glib answer that has been part of your pattern as we've dealt with this question, this very important question in question period. I ask you not to just stand in your place and say it's time to pray for rain and that'll cure all that ails us. Clearly the drought is part of the problem. I admit that. I accept that. I don't like that, but that's reality, and I understand that. But also, Mr. Minister, it's not the whole story.

As you will know last year Manitoba had a drought just as bad as Saskatchewan, and while we were losing 13,300 people, Manitoba was losing only 6,200, even though they were the second highest province to suffer a loss in 1988. Last year, we had the largest population loss by more than double of any other province in all of Canada, Mr. Minister.

And so, Mr. Minister, let's set aside the drought. You and I both accept that that's had an impact on Saskatchewan, but clearly that's not the whole explanation. You have a

department which is mandated to deal with migration. You have officials who, I am sure, if you have been serving this province according to your responsibilities as required in your act who have been looking at this, and I would ask for your explanation, sir, as to why it is that we are losing our most valuable resource from the province of Saskatchewan — our men and women and children.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, it's truly sad that for many, many years people have left Saskatchewan to seek opportunities elsewhere. It is a situation that bothers this government a great deal and we try to do whatever is possible to correct that situation. The fact is that from 1971 to 1982, 51,000 people left Saskatchewan; and then from 1982 to 1989, 52,000 people left Saskatchewan. So what we had was a decade of social democratic government where 50,000 people left. We've had a decade of a free market government and 50,000 people have left. And I'd be pleased to analyse why that has happened.

The socialist decade in Saskatchewan was a decade where we had high oil prices, high grain prices, high prices for potash, and just as many people left as the decade where we had a Conservative government where we had low prices for all three of those commodities, and drought thrown in on top of that. Part of the reason that in the past decade we've had people leave is because of the diversification that didn't take place under social planning in a period of time when money could have been spent diversifying Saskatchewan.

People will go to where they believe is a land of opportunity, and that's what this government is trying to do. This government has not done that quick enough, mostly due to the opposition who have held up plans of this particular government to diversify the economy, to include the public in participating and investing in their own province. We are trying to make this a land of opportunity; due to the opposition that progress has been slower than we had hoped.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, people world-wide have always left socially planned states and moved to market economies, and Saskatchewan is not yet a full market economy province; and that is what we were trying to do in this session and the last session, and in the next session, Mr. Chairman. And I can give you many, many examples, but I mean you could follow the list. People try to leave East Germany for West Germany. People try to leave Vietnam for Hong Kong. And people are allowed to leave Saskatchewan for Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. Not many are going to Manitoba these days because they weren't diversified enough either. Manitoba is virtually a city state; it's an entirely different kind of province in any event.

So those examples tell you that people leave socially planned economies whenever they are allowed to and move to free market economies. People look for opportunity. We have to build in Saskatchewan, the land of opportunity, so that people have the ability, the rights, the opportunity to succeed. And unfortunately with that opportunity to succeed also comes the opportunity to fail. Because you have the old saying: nothing ventured, nothing gained. And there always will be some failures

when people are trying new things. But if we don't try new things in Saskatchewan, we will continue in the same old ways. And when prices are high, we will live high. And when prices are low, people will leave.

And so therefore, Mr. Chairman, members opposite and I will have a disagreement on how to improve Saskatchewan in the future. I ask the people to look at the world as a whole, to look at the world-wide economies, see where people are trying to move to in the world. For example, California in the United States has been the fastest growing state. It is also the most conservative state and also it is the most capitalistic state in the United States, although they might have a dispute about that.

So clearly people are flowing within countries and throughout the world to areas where there is a free market economy with opportunity, and that's what we must build in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, if the plans are working so well, then explain to me why people, if they're coming into this province, they're fleeing into this province in reverse, Mr. Minister, because as a matter of fact, as I've outlined in what I'm quoting to you are numbers that are produced by your government, Mr. Minister. These are your numbers, not mine. These are your numbers that I'm using. Clearly your free market economy is not working.

You know, you refer to the population loss in the era of the Blakeney government, through the '70s and into the '80s. Mr. Minister, that statement you make is blatantly incorrect. It's non-factual; it's unjustifiable. The total population loss, Mr. Minister, in the first seven years, Mr. Minister, of your government clearly exceeds the population impact over the 11 years of the Blakeney government.

And also we have to look at that in its proper context. You and I both understand that when a new government comes into place for a year or two the impact of the previous government, you are either blessed with that or you're saddled with that, because it takes time to put your new imprint. And you will recognize, Mr. Minister, when you look at the population impacts of the '70s, that the largest population losses of the Blakeney government were in its first couple of years, while we're still saddled with the impact of the Thatcher Liberal government.

You will also recognize, Mr. Minister, that the two best years of your government were your first two, while you were still blessed with the benefits of an economy that was overseen, that was directed by a New Democrat government in the province of Saskatchewan. Them's the facts. Mr. Minister, them's the facts.

Clearly, Mr. Minister, your explanation of the problem is not correct. It is not substantiated by the numbers. It's not substantiated by the history or the record.

I ask you then, Mr. Minister, given that it is your responsibility to deal with in-migration to attract people to this province of ours, and that your explanation as to why we have lost 50,000 — a net loss of 50,000 people in

the last four and a half years alone, in this period of time in which you have been able to entrench your economic approach to the province — privatization . . . I mean, your philosophy has been operative and I will admit you started a little slowly and you benefitted from the economic impacts of the performance of the Blakeney government. But since you have moved to your ideologically motivated privatization agenda, the impact in this province has been clear. It's been people fleeing this province, and there can be no more telling indicator as to the effectiveness of your approach. Clearly your assessment of the problem, Mr. Minister, is one upon which we will not agree.

But let us deal then with the more important question, and the more important question is: what are you going to do to reverse it? Are we down to praying for rain as you've said in this House before? Is that all that you have to offer to reverse this trend to start bringing back the young people and bringing back the families of Saskatchewan who have left with shattered dreams?

Mr. Minister, what is the plan? And don't give me privatization. Privatization is the cause; it's the problem, not the solution. The solution is not more of the same that has driven 50,000, a net loss of 50,000 people out of the province in the last four and a half years. More of the same is not the solution, Mr. Minister.

And I ask you to explain to this Assembly, and you have more time today than you do in question period, but to give the people of Saskatchewan a sensible explanation as to what it is that your government is going to do differently. Don't tell me more of the same. More of the same obviously will get the same result. That's not the one we want. What is your government doing, or going to do differently from what it has been doing in order to reverse that trend to bring home the children and to bring home the families from Saskatchewan, those who have been lost, those 50,000, who've been lost over the last four and a half years?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the member opposite denies that an equal number of people left under social planning of the 1970s and gives no logical explanation why those people left other than he says, well the statistics aren't correct. Does he say that StatsCanada lies? Or does he say that they can't add? I don't know what he says about StatsCanada. But StatsCanada did those calculations, Mr. Chairman.

If the member opposite won't accept the truth, then they can continue speaking otherwise. That is their business. We're quite used to them doing that, not accepting the facts in front of them. But there is no explanation as to why, under social planning in the '80s, we lost with high prices as many people as we lost with low prices and drought. I've explained that we have done a lot, and I have agreed that we haven't done enough and we are going to do more.

I mean, what does the member want us to do? Shut down the upgrader in Regina so that we could go back to not having those jobs? Or do you want us to tear down the paper mill in Prince Albert because those 300 jobs have been detrimental to Saskatchewan economy? Does he

want us . . . I mean, we know that he wants to stop the construction of dams and power plants in south-eastern Saskatchewan. They've already cheered about that delay.

Does he want us to stop the expansion of Flexi-Coil in Saskatoon with 300 new jobs? Does he want us to stop the construction of a fertilizer plant between Regina and Moose Jaw because Cargill owns half of it? Yesterday we heard the members opposite say that SaskEnergy, if privatized, should not invest in a fertilizer plant. But we didn't hear them say that SaskEnergy, if owned by the government, should not invest in a fertilizer plant. Those are the kinds of things that they would do, but didn't do.

(0830)

I mean, they owned the potash company for many years. Did it ever diversify? It never diversified from holes in the ground, still has the holes in the ground, still has the same people working in those holes; people have the same jobs. Where are the new jobs? Where's the diversification?

If they believed so much in the values of socialism, why didn't they at least diversify the Crown corporations? The answer, Ms. Speaker, is because they could never get it right. Back when I was a little boy they couldn't build shoes, they couldn't build state shoes, they couldn't build state boxes, they couldn't run anything appropriately from a state point of view. And when we sell these things to the people and the corporation's owned by the people, to operate these things properly, they say, stop doing that.

I say, what is the alternative to our programs? Not only will you see these megaprojects like the Husky Oil upgrader at Lloydminster, but you will see in the next few years, hundreds of small diversifications, operations with 10 and 15 employees, owned by Saskatchewan citizens.

And clearly we have to do — I agree with the member opposite — we have to do more decentralization outside of the large cities of this province. We have to do more diversification in the rural areas which are becoming depopulated. I'm pleased that the members opposite will agree with those policies, and I'm sure that they will applaud, as much as they can find it in their hearts to applaud, when we move other industries and other organizations into rural Saskatchewan to stop the depopulation there.

So at least we have a plan. And I say the reason it's not working as well as it should is because it's not moving as fast as it should. And if he wants to talk about privatization, the answer is yes, more of that. If he wants to talk about diversification, the answer is yes, more than that. If he wants to talk about building more small industries owned by the small shareholders of Saskatchewan, yes, we need to do more of that.

Mr. Chairman, we have a plan, we are moving on it, it can be more successful and it will be more successful. But I have yet to hear from members opposite what they would do. I challenge the member opposite to tell us how he would make this economy work. Would he buy other existing businesses or would he diversify something? The members opposite have been a true opposition. They

have opposed everything, but there is a greater duty. There is a duty, if they ever wish to become government, to tell us how they would make things better.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I think you've just uttered the most frightening words that the people of Saskatchewan could possibly hear in that your plan, your plan for the future is more privatization.

Mr. Minister, when you talk about decentralization and diversification, you'll get no argument from this side of the House. That's the route to go. But, Mr. Minister, the fact of the matter is and the record of the New Democratic government is that those were things that were not just talked about, but were done. And there's a difference between using words and using the actions.

Your privatization plan has been an abject failure in the minds of the vast majority of Saskatchewan people because they understand; they understand the results of privatization. It has been lost jobs, it has been a failing economy, and it has been people fleeing this province. That's been the consequences, and they do not want more of the same.

I am extremely disappointed, Mr. Minister — not surprised but extremely disappointed — to hear you say that what people of Saskatchewan can expect from your government is more of the problem, when what they're really looking for is a solution.

You will recognize, Mr. Minister, that in the days of the New Democrat government when there was some conscious planning put into management of the economy, that natural resources returned a fair profit to the people of Saskatchewan to provide services, to stimulate employment, and to keep down taxes. That was the reality. We had low unemployment in those days and we'll get into the comparison in a few minutes. We'll deal with the comparison of the New Democrat track record in creation of employment and your track record in creation of employment.

Mr. Minister, there is an idea that has been successful traditionally and historically in the province of Saskatchewan, and the idea is one, it's not ideological, it's pragmatic, and it works. It's the mixed economy, Mr. Minister. It's the private sector functioning with the entrepreneurial spirit, allowed to do that. It's the co-operative sector, Mr. Minister, which under your government has simply dropped out of sight. Point me to the department of co-operatives, if you will. There is not a sign in this province that describes the department of co-operatives. You can't find the building; it doesn't exist anymore. You don't have such a department. And there is the public sector which in a province of low population, a large area and intense climate that we have to deal with, Mr. Minister. That's the reality.

The reality is that it's the mixed economy that has worked historically in this province. That is the model of economic development that your government has deserted, and we're paying the price. People are fleeing the province — 50,000 in the last four and a half years alone. That's the answer, Mr. Minister. That's what New Democrats have done. It's worked successfully and that's

what New Democrats will do, and it will work successfully when given the opportunity which I expect in the next year or two to begin once again, Mr. Minister. That's what it's about.

And I ask you, Mr. Minister, to give some serious thought to my recommendation that you desert your failed plan for managing the economy that impacts so drastically in the people of Saskatchewan — the most devastating impact it can possibly be, the loss of 50,000, a net loss of 50,000 men, women, and children from the province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, the solution the opposition have is not very promising. They say develop resources and that is the case, but I mean Saskatchewan has been developing new resources for 100 years and I . . . Very few things scare me, Mr. Chairman, but what scares me is the thought of the members opposite governing this province with a 100-year-old policy of developing resources. The problem in Saskatchewan is nobody has ever processed or manufactured those resources into finished products.

Members opposite still have, I believe, as part of their resolutions, the policy that anything sold by this government would be bought back for a dollar. That is one of their resolutions. Would they buy back WESTBRIDGE for a dollar from the employees who paid to buy shares and have built that into a big company? Would they buy back Saskoil from the employees who participated by buying some of that company? Would they buy back the yellow pages operations into the SaskTel from the employees who, I believe, it is 85 per cent over-subscribed yet for those shares? Would they do all that for a dollar? That should scare those employees. That should scare those shareholders, as much as it scares me, to think that those people only have one policy to dig more holes in the ground. At least that's an improvement over their last policy which was to buy the existing holes. But there has to be some secondary processing in this province. Mr. Chairman, buying back what already exists for a dollar, I submit, this is a dollar, I submit that policy is loony.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, at the end of the day there is only one measure that counts and that's your job creation performance, and it's dismal. And so your jumble of words a few minutes ago about what you're doing doesn't make any sense. And it's curious. I'd like to know at what point you and your government are going to consider that you're responsible for the situation we find ourselves in. I don't know how long you think you can go on blaming an administration that's been out of power for almost 10 years. And the fact that you're now the government and have been for over seven years, it's your responsibility to develop specific policies, to improve the employment situation for the people in Saskatchewan.

And you talked at the outset about gradual progress over the last year. And I'd like to tell the 15,000 people almost who have left this province this year that you're making gradual progress in your department. The facts don't bear that out — 1988-89 has been a year of hardship for thousands of families and thousands of

young people in the province of Saskatchewan. The first year, you talk about gradual progress, this is the first year that we have consistently had an unemployment rate above the national average. Now that's your legacy. It's got nothing to do with the opposition or any other government, that's your legacy. For the first time that's a situation we find ourselves in.

Now you may be satisfied with that, but I can tell you that the Saskatchewan people are not satisfied with that. Young people are not satisfied with that. You talked about the need to build opportunity. Well tell the 43,000 people looking for work that you're creating opportunities for them. I mean, that just doesn't make any sense. Your record doesn't bear out what you're talking about.

I would like to focus a few comments this morning on the issue that young people find themselves in. And I too have travelled around the province as critic for youth and families, and have talked to many young people in many settings — at the university level, at the technical school level, and in smaller communities. Mr. Minister, the issue of unemployment and out-migration, while serious for Saskatchewan people generally, is especially troubling when we look at the situation in those two issues for our young people. And I'm referring here to young people generally under the age of 29. But the unemployment rate for young people 15 to 24 is over 12 per cent, almost double the provincial average as you will well know.

The work-force of young people under age 25 in 1981 was 110,000 — 110,000 young people in the work-force. In 1988 or just seven years later, that was reduced to 90,000. In other words in this seven-year period under your administration, we have lost 20,000 young people in the work-force. Now that's not opposition propaganda; that comes from your statistics. And I don't see you dealing with this issue, in fact, that increasingly the number of young people in the work-force is being decreased.

In 1982 the number of young people under age 25 represented 19 per cent of the population. Today that number is less than 16 per cent, in other words, a drop of over 3 per cent in just seven years. And I assume that you are concerned about that, the loss of our young people. I think any responsible minister would be concerned about that situation.

In terms of out-migration, I've asked you questions in question period two or three times over the last four months, and you have never once acknowledged that out-migration of young people is a concern of you and your government. And as my colleague has just said, we've had the worst record last year of any other province in general out-migration, over double those who have left Manitoba, and certainly the drought didn't stop at the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border. This year again, almost 15,000 people have left, and that could result in, over the course of the years, some 20,000 people leaving, or 25,000 people leaving. So every month you talk about, when those statistics come out about out-migration, you talk about how good things will be. And we heard you talk . . . you're starting out like that again this morning — how good things will be.

Well in 1985 we lost over 4,000 people in terms of net out-migration. In 1986 it was over 7,000; 1987, over 9,000, almost 10; 1988, almost 15; projected for 1989, 25. So over the five-year period, Mr. Minister, you can see an alarming trend occurring. It's just simply getting worse every year . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, certainly you can't cover that up. What does that tell you? That's over a five-year period, the situation gets worse by anywhere from 3 to 5,000 people leaving the province.

And the concern I have is that, as I understand it, about 60 per cent of these people leaving are under 29 years of age. So approximately 30,000 of these people who have left over the last five years have been young people under the age of 29.

So for five years you've been selling our assets and you've been promising that this will create jobs and we will diversify. Well it just simply isn't working, and I wonder when it's going to work. This high unemployment and these frightening out-migration figures show one thing, Mr. Minister, and as my colleague has said, they show that your privatization policies are simply not working. Privatization is failing.

And I would suggest that instead of selling young people's future, you should be developing programs, specific programs to boost the economy and to provide specific jobs and opportunities for our young people. As I say you keeping denying that there's a problem. You're the Minister of Social Services, well, that says there's no poverty in Saskatchewan. Well you can't deal with the problem, Mr. Minister, until you acknowledge that it exists, and so far you haven't done that.

(0845)

And I would say that it's no wonder that small-business people, it's no wonder that ordinary workers and poor people have no confidence in you. Your Premier promises cheap land and cheap labour, and the only result has been that young people are leaving in record numbers to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Well, Mr. Minister, these young people are our future workers; they're our future leaders, they're our future small-business men and women. And you talk about valuing families. You and the Premier talk more than any other ministers about valuing families and valuing young people. And I don't doubt that you do value families and value young people, but certainly your policies don't demonstrate that you consider ordinary Saskatchewan families and young people as being valuable. Your legacy of failed economic policies is going to cost young people dearly for many, many years to come.

Mr. Minister, in terms of summer jobs for young people, to get a little more specific here, you have persistently and continually lessened the amount of money targeted or available for summer employment. And one of the ways you've done that is that you've tightened the eligibility criteria for employers. In this budget you've cut almost a million dollars or over 22 per cent, which represents another loss of a thousand jobs this summer.

So in 1986-87, which was the election year, you put \$9

million towards summer employment programs for young people. The very next year you cut it back to 4 million, eliminated over 6,000 jobs for summer students. Now in this budget you're only going to create about 3,000 summer jobs. And so you . . . in three short years you've cut back in about 8,000 jobs, and you now have to be a Tory to get a summer job in this province. That's the only way you'll get a summer job.

And so, Mr. Minister, given your sorry record of high unemployment for young people and young people leaving in record numbers, these kinds of cuts to summer employment programs are inexcusable. Our young people are bright and they're energetic and they're eager, and they're looking for opportunities. They deserve opportunities. They deserve a promising future. You've got money for Montpetit and birthday parties and money to rent expensive office spaces and money for expensive advertising. And I suggest, Mr. Minister, that you should shift your priorities to diverting some of that money to job creation for young people in the province.

And I guess I would like to ask you, Mr. Minister, and I'd like you to be specific if you don't mind: what are your plans — apart from general, fuzzy sort of rhetoric that you've uttered so far this morning — what are your specific plans? You're the minister that's responsible to ensure that there are job opportunities for young people in the province. What are your specific plans to improve the economic prospects and the job prospects for young people so that we won't have this high unemployment rate and so that young people won't have to leave the province in record numbers in the coming months. What are your specific plans?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm not surprised that the members opposite don't understand my answers. They didn't understand my answers when I was a member of their party in the 1970s.

An Hon. Member: — That was before we kicked you out.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, members opposite say they kicked me out. It seems to me that you don't have no documentation or any truth that you ever kicked me out of your party. But if you want to retroactively kick me out of your party, I will accept a letter stating that as of 1975 that I am kicked out of the NDP. I would accept that and hold it in high esteem as being proof that they didn't understand my answers in 1975 when I told them not to do certain things that were loony.

I certainly didn't fit into that party, Mr. Speaker. I had too great of a respect for the truth and I couldn't master all of the tricks of that particular party with respect as to how one should campaign and how one should speak in public. And I was raised as a Christian Lutheran, where my grandmother taught me strictly and my parents and my church that one should not lie, and my wife finally convinced me that I could not fit in to the New Democratic Party.

Let me state clearly, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has said that I said there's no poverty in Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Chairman, here's what I said, and you can check the record. I said, the people of Saskatchewan are

not living in poverty. I've never denied that there aren't poor people in Saskatchewan. I did not say there is no poverty in Saskatchewan. If it were not against the rules, I would call the member what he is, Mr. Speaker. But clearly stating the truth in here is sometimes against the rules and so you can't say anything on some occasions.

So let it be made clear that the members opposite have not changed their ways from the time I left and still do not understand the facts as they are, can't read *Hansard* as it is. Of course, I know the problem, Mr. Chairman, is they don't want to. They don't want to face the facts.

The facts, Mr. Chairman, with respect to employment for youth are that the NDP spent in the last four years of their government, for summer employment, an average of \$1 million per year. But this government by 1986-87 had increased that spending to \$9 million a year — ninefold. And clearly, we could not with our deficit sustain a ninefold increase in the expenditure for youth summer employment. So in the next few years we reduced that sum.

This year it stands at \$3.1 million, triple what the NDP spent in 1981-82, 1980-81, 1979-80, and 1978-79. We are still spending triple that sum. The facts are right there. They may not want to accept them, Mr. Deputy Chairman. The facts are there. The NDP don't understand my answers because they don't want to understand my answers. They don't like the answers. They don't like the fact that they are true, clearly there stated. This has been audited by the auditor that they esteem. That auditor, I believe, can add and subtract. I have no doubt whatsoever that those figures are accurate, Mr. Chairman.

In addition, let us look at what's happened in the last six or seven years with respect to the economy and this government's job creation policies. In non-agriculture, the number of people employed has gone up by 35,000 in the last six or seven years, Mr. Chairman. In agriculture the number of people employed has dropped by 9,000. Certainly, Mr. Chairman, that is not for lack of this government trying.

The Premier of this province said that he would stake the treasury for agriculture, and he did. You ask why do we have a deficit. The Premier kept his promise. He promised that he would stake the treasury to defend agriculture and assist agriculture. He did, and we now have a deficit. And if people want to know where that money went, it went into health care for people, it went to assist farmers, and it went to assist home owners. That treasury has been put to use for the people of Saskatchewan.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, since April of 1982 the total labour force has increased by 52,000 people. This is 11.6 per cent increase. Since 1982 total employment has increased by 45,000 people. Since April 1982 the participation rate has increased by 5.4 per cent. We now have more two-income families in this province, and we have one of the highest rates in Canada for participation. We have more two-income families than virtually any province. There may be an exception in Ontario, but for a province of this size, with this type of economy, our record is phenomenal.

Mr. Chairman, after the member opposite went through a rather long speech asking many questions which I've tried to answer, he said specifically, what are you going to do in the future to provide jobs. Specifically, what we are going to do is we are going to continue to diversify Saskatchewan. We are going to build Saskatchewan. There are building periods in Saskatchewan and there are buying periods. Ross Thatcher and his Liberal government in the '60s built. The NDP government under Allan Blakeney in the 1970s bought what already existed. In the 1980s, the Government of Saskatchewan, a PC government, has continued to build and sell some of those things that were needlessly bought.

The members opposite are concerned with privatization, as they call it. There are two elements to that: there is public participation, and yes, there is privatization. I can say to the members opposite that privatization will soon come to an end, because you cannot sell off things that should not be sold, and there's very little left to be sold in Saskatchewan. However, once we have completed the few small projects that should no longer be owned by the government, then we have to move into the future.

The policy of this government will be to continue to build and diversify. The members opposite live in the past. They believe that there's only two possibilities: nationalizing or privatizing. Neither of those two concept are relevant when the government governs and does not own everything. The next phase for the government then is to continue building. That's the policy — specifically we will continue to build, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, there was a political leader some time ago who operated under the principle what we desire for ourselves we wish for all. It was J. S. Woodsworth who said that, and also, Mr. Minister, who put that policy into practice. And it is one that I would recommend for you.

Mr. Minister, in response to your answer that you just provided the member from Saskatoon Eastview, you say that your government is trying. Well, Mr. Minister, I agree. Your government is trying — very trying on the people of Saskatchewan. That's the reality. That's the reality.

When we take a look . . . Mr. Minister, let's just take a look at your mandate and some of the facts, because the facts, your own government's facts, Mr. Minister, do not back up your contention that things are somehow getting better and that you're on the right track for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, your own Act requires you to again, under section 4.01(2), and I quote. Where it says:

The minister may:

(a) establish and operate any programs and services connected with manpower matters that he considers necessary to provide adequate employment opportunities for residents of Saskatchewan, including programs related to:

Now, related to what?

(v) the development of employment in Saskatchewan (it says);

It says:

(b) co-ordinate and promote policies, (and) programs and activities of the departments and agencies of the Government of Saskatchewan relating to job creation;

It says:

(d) monitor, promote and co-ordinate the development and implementation of programs respecting the provision of jobs in Saskatchewan;

And:

(i) implement any programs that he considers necessary with respect to the provision of jobs in Saskatchewan.

The provision of jobs in Saskatchewan is repeated over and over in the mandate of your department, Mr. Minister. And what's the reality? What's the reality? Let's take a look at some government . . . Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics numbers, Mr. Minister, the cold, hard facts of the matter.

And what they tell us, Mr. Minister, is that in 1981, if you want to go back that far to the beginning of the New Democrat era in the province of Saskatchewan, there were 3,300 . . . sorry, 334,000 people working in the province of Saskatchewan. By 1981 that has increased, Mr. Minister, to 425,000; over 90,000 jobs created, Mr. Minister, an average — an average under New Democrat administration in the province of Saskatchewan of 9,100 new jobs per year, Mr. Minister.

What's been the performance of your government, Mr. Minister? In 1988, number of jobs has increased — I agree — to 451,000 is the number that your Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics indicates. That's an increase, Mr. Minister, of 26,000, on average, an average of 3,714 new jobs per year, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, clearly, clearly the track record of the New Democrat government for the people of Saskatchewan is that the creation of jobs is more than twice as successful as the record of your government. That's the facts of the matter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(0900)

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, in 1981, the last full year of a New Democrat government, there were 21,000, unfortunately, 21,000 unemployed — 4.7 per cent. What's the reality in 1988? Thirty-seven thousand, 37,000 — 7.5 per cent unemployment under our government. Again that's the reality.

My colleague has underlined and outlined the loss of

employment opportunities for young people. Well, Mr. Minister, let's take the most recent information. The publication by your government, Mr. Minister, your government, which was released last month, *The Saskatchewan Labour Market*, July 1989, and what does it say about your government? Does it say that you're heading on the right track, that things are getting better, and that there is a rosy future ahead for the province and for the people of this province? It doesn't say that, Mr. Minister. It doesn't say that. Let me quote from your own document, your department's own document for July, for last month, Mr. Minister. And what does it say? It says this, it says:

Saskatchewan is tied for Alberta with the third lowest unemployment rate in Canada on an unadjusted basis, 7.1 per cent.

Now some would say third lowest in Canada is not bad. Under New Democrats, Mr. Minister, never were we worse than second in unemployment and often we had the highest employment rate in all of Canada. It says, Mr. Minister, in your own document:

On a seasonally adjusted basis, Saskatchewan had the fourth lowest rate, 7.5 per cent on a seasonally adjusted basis.

It says:

The unadjusted employment rate of 7.1 per cent . . .

Was it better, Mr. Minister? No, it says:

The . . . unemployment rate of 7.1 per cent was up from 6.7 per cent a year ago.

What else does it say? It says:

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 7.5 per cent was up from 7.2 per cent of July 1988.

It says:

Since last July, (since a year ago, Mr. Minister) employment decreased on an actual basis by 3,000 in the province of Saskatchewan to 464,000.

Your document, Mr. Minister, in July also says:

That Saskatoon's unemployment rate was 9 per cent in July, up from 8.1 per cent a year ago.

For Regina, is there good news for the people of Regina from the PC Government of Saskatchewan? Your document of July, Mr. Minister, says:

Regina's unemployment rate was 7.6 per cent in July, up from 6.4 per cent a year ago.

What does your document, Mr. Minister, of July say about unemployment. It says:

On an actual basis, 35,000 people were

unemployed in July, up from 2,000 from June, and up a 1,000 from the level one year ago.

What does it say about employment in your document of July, Mr. Minister? It says:

The actual number of people employed fell by 3,000 since a year ago, totalling 464,000.

That's performance PC style, Mr. Minister. What does it say about the labour force? It says:

That Saskatchewan's labour force was 499,000 — 2,000 below the July 1988 level of 501,000.

That's what your document says about your performance, Mr. Minister. What does it say about youth employment in the province of Saskatchewan? It says:

The number of unemployed youth, 15 to 24 years old, was down 5,000 over July of last year. The unemployment rate for youth was 11.6 per cent, unchanged from last year.

Young people, Mr. Minister, are not lining up to send thank you cards to you and the PC government of Saskatchewan.

What does it say about the cities in the province of Saskatchewan, the biggest cities? It says, Saskatoon's unemployment rate of 9.0 per cent was up from 8.1 per cent a year ago, and that Saskatoon had the fourth highest unemployment rate amount 23 cities for which unemployment rates were recorded — the fourth highest unemployment rate in all of Canada, Mr. Minister. And employment in Saskatoon decreased by 1,000 since a year ago.

What does it say about Regina, Mr. Minister? Your document of July. It says the Regina unemployment rate was 7.6 per cent, up from 6.4 per cent a year ago.

And what's going on in Canada? How do we compare to the rest of the nation, Mr. Minister? Perhaps Canada's in trouble and we're just going down with the rest of the country. What it says about the nation, Mr. Minister, in your document of July: that the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in all of Canada was 7.5 per cent, down, down — unemployment down in Canada — from 7.8 per cent in the previous year. And on actual basis the national unemployment rate was 7.2 per cent, down 0.3 percentage points from the previous year.

And so that's the picture, Mr. Minister. For the first time in the history of this province since unemployment records were kept, the province of Saskatchewan has had higher unemployment rates than the national unemployment rates. And while the national unemployment rates are going down, the unemployment rates in Saskatchewan are going up. That's PC performance in the area of job creation for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, and I submit that it has been a dismal failure. Your government has failed miserably for the people of Saskatchewan. That's the reality and there's no denying it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, we've heard your explanations that what people can expect is more of the same, more of the same. That's all you have to offer in these estimated related to Human Resources, Labour and Employment in the most significant issue in the province of Saskatchewan — out-migration, unemployment, and more of the same.

Well, Mr. Minister, you also have a mandate to implement the policies of your Premier. And I want to quote to you, Mr. Minister, from the Moose Jaw Times-Herald, Saturday, March 4, 1989, in an article entitled: "Devine yens for Asian funds." And how does the article lead off, Mr. Minister? This is an article that covered statements of your Premier when he was in Moose Jaw speaking to PC loyalists.

And the article begins this way, and let me quote, Mr. Minister:

Asian entrepreneurs hoping to cash in on the Canada-U.S. free trade pact could be lured to Saskatchewan with promises of cheap land and cheap labour, Premier Grant Devine said Friday.

That's the statement of your Premier — cheap labour. Mr. Minister, what's the reality? The reality is, when I take a look at the last available annual report of your department of 1987-88, it points out a startling fact, a harsh reality for many people in the province of Saskatchewan, for literally, literally, Mr. Minister, somewhere between 30 and 50,000 people, probably closer to the higher number. What it says is that the order, number one, of your minimum wage board, Mr. Minister, the minimum wage is 4.50 per hour effective August 1, 1985. That's the last time the minimum wage changed in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, when you inherited government, unemployment was below 5 per cent, people were working, small businesses were doing well, the province was flourishing, and we had the highest minimum wage in all of Canada. Here we are now in 1988, 1989, being the only province — the only province — that has not had a change in minimum wage for over four years — over four years, Mr. Minister. That's the reality.

And where are we now? How does Saskatchewan compare to the rest of the country? Mr. Minister, the reality is that today Saskatchewan has the sixth highest minimum wage in all of Canada. Once we were tops. And the fact of the matter is, Mr. Minister, that one of the provinces we're tied with is British Columbia, which also has a 4.50-an-hour minimum wage, and which is increasing to 4.75 on October 1, and then again increasing to \$5 an hour on April 1 of next year.

On October 1, Mr. Minister, the reality is Saskatchewan will have the seventh highest minimum wage in all of Canada. As of October 1, Mr. Minister, as of October 1, only Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island will have lower minimum wages than the working people in the province of Saskatchewan. Every other province and territory has increased their minimum wage since

Saskatchewan's last increase way back on August 1 of 1985.

Mr. Minister, the consumer price index has gone up 16 per cent since the last time that your government has seen fit to move the minimum wage for the working poor of the province of Saskatchewan. Inflation has been 16 per cent since that time.

Mr. Minister, since your government came to office in 1982, there's been only one adjustment in minimum wage back in August 1 of 1985. Since that time, inflation in Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, has been 45 per cent — 45 per cent is the reality in the cost of living for the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Minister, you've had one minimum wage increase in seven and a half years of PC government, an increase of 25 per cent, less than 25 cents and less than 6 per cent. That's the reality, Mr. Minister. That's the reality for working people in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I ask you, sir, I ask you: last year we talked about your policy for minimum wage and my belief that what you're attempting to do, consistent with the philosophy of your Premier, is to move the Saskatchewan minimum wage closer to the standard in the United States. And as a matter of fact, Mr. Minister, most American states are very close; they've caught up to the province of Saskatchewan, while the rest of the nation continues to move ahead. Not here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, and I ask you: is your dealing with the minimum wage, one increase in seven and a half years, 25 cents, less than 6 per cent while inflation has gone up 45 per cent — is that part of your Premier's philosophy, part of your Premier's policy of cheap labour to attract Asian investors? Is that what it's all about, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, first of all, dealing with unemployment, Saskatoon has a high unemployment rate. It's also one of the fastest growing cities in Canada. It has now outgrown Regina in size. One of the main reasons Saskatoon has such a high unemployment rate is because people desire to live and work in Saskatoon and move in faster than jobs can be created in Saskatoon . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . One of the members opposite shouts from his seat, I am sickening. Yes, I am sick, Mr. Chairman.

An Hon. Member: — No, he said you were a sick man . . . (inaudible) . . . you can tell by your voice . . .

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Oh, they're arguing now that I am a sick man. Yes, I do have a cold today. Mr. Chairman, but that kind of attitude from the members opposite shows you what they are really like, Mr. Chairman. They are people who go around saying, oh we care for people, but their hearts are as hard and as mean as you will ever find, Mr. Chairman. And if you look around the world, you will see that socialists everywhere are long on rhetoric but short on heart and caring about their actual people.

With respect to costs of labour and wages, labour costs are not nearly as major a factor as they once were. In fact in manufacturing, Mr. Chairman, labour costs are only 13 per cent of the total overhead in manufacturing.

It is an interesting fact, Mr. Chairman, that the highest overall wage costs in the world are in the following countries: number one, Switzerland; number two, West Germany; number three, Japan. Canada and the United States have lower wage costs, or have lower wages than those three countries. What's interesting about those three countries is they also have the healthiest economies of any of the countries of the world. They have the highest wage costs and the healthiest economies. That is proof that you can have prosperity and high wages.

What you have to have, Mr. Chairman, is productivity. You cannot think about archaic ways, you cannot have your ideas in the 1930s and the 1920s. You can have high wages and a productive society if you have market economies, as they have in Switzerland, West Germany, Japan. Here we have the socially planned ideas and confrontation between the class struggle is what they try to encourage. What we should be encouraging is a classless society where everyone has an opportunity to be an owner or an employee.

Switzerland, West Germany, and Japan have the highest wage costs, have social programs that are richer than Canada's with respect to Switzerland and West Germany, and they also have greater productivity. And therefore to have greater productivity, you cannot remain in the old ways of thinking, you cannot have the ideas of the 19th century, you cannot follow the theories of Marx and believe you will have prosperity.

Those three countries do not confuse social programs with socialism. They have market economies, they have productivity, they have healthy economies, and they have high wages. That is something Canada should strive to attain.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, that was a wild and rambling oratorical excursion you just took us on. But in the course of your comments, Mr. Minister, you make my point. It's not tough, it's not impossible; in fact it has been the history in this province of Saskatchewan that you can have a healthy economy, you can have people working, you can have small business flourishing, you can have people with money in their pockets, and you can have a high minimum wage all at the same time. It's happened in Saskatchewan and it's happened under a New Democrat government, Mr. Minister. That's the reality.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — I note as well, I note as well that you managed to avoid my question. My question, Mr. Minister, is whether your government's minimum wage policy reflects your Premier's statement that what we want to do in this province is to attract the Asian investors with cheap labour? That's the question, Mr. Minister.

And so let me ask you: in light of your Premier's statements that what we are trying to do in Saskatchewan is to attract Asian investors with our cheap labour, what are your plans, what are your plans regarding the minimum wage in the province of Saskatchewan? What hope do the working poor in the province of Saskatchewan have, and by right then, what can they

expect from your department, Mr. Minister, by way of movement of the minimum wage in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — The assurance that people of Saskatchewan have, Mr. Chairman, is that we will build a healthier economy where fewer people will have to worry about working at the minimum wage, where there will be jobs that are diversified and industries. The great economies of the world today do not concern themselves with minimum wage jobs. We do not think at that kind of level that we should try to create more minimum wage jobs. We are talking here about jobs that pay 12, 14, \$16 an hour. That's what drives the economy of West Germany and Japan and Switzerland. We're looking at jobs that pay higher wages.

Now that's clear the members opposite only think in terms of the negative, the lowest common denominator. If this government is allowed to continue with its policies, there will be more higher paying jobs and there'll be fewer people working at minimum wage.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, you're totally ignoring the question. The reality is that there are at least 30,000 and possibly up to 50,000 people in this province whose income is directly related to the minimum wage or that their wage is tied to minimum wage. It's minimum wage plus 10 cents or minimum wage plus 25 cents. That's the reality. You know that.

Why are you avoiding the question? I ask you simply. I pointed out your Premier's policy, stated policy of cheap labour in the province of Saskatchewan, and I ask you again: what is your intention to move the minimum wage for the working poor in the province of Saskatchewan? Mr. Minister, will you please address the question.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, the Premier has no policy of cheap wages in Saskatchewan. I do not accept that media article as being accurate. I would have to have further proof. I have learned a long time ago not to believe everything you read in the paper, nor to believe everything that the members opposite drag into the House.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, your policy for changing the minimum wage in the province of Saskatchewan.

An Hon. Member: — Can you repeat that again?

Mr. Hagel: — Well I'll repeat it again, Mr. Minister. I've asked the same question three times; this will be number four. What is your policy for changing the minimum wage in the province of Saskatchewan? What is your plan?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, we plan to raise the minimum wage as soon as possible, and we'll have to see how the economy progresses. Things are looking quite good this fall. With at least an average crop and a growth rate in the 3.8 per cent rate, I believe it will be possible to do it in the near future.

Mr. Hagel: — When and by how much, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I already said in the near future, and by a sum that we feel the economy can absorb. The member opposite wants to know exactly which day, and there's some things I don't know. I don't know which day I will die on; I don't know which hour. I don't know many things, Mr. Chairman. I don't know how much it hailed in my constituency last night. There are some things that members opposite will just have to wait and watch them unfold.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, the reality is that there are some 50,000 people in this province who depend on you to adjust their potential income in the province of Saskatchewan. That's the reality.

Mr. Minister, have you had input from small-business people, saying that they could live with a minimum wage? Have you had input from small-business people, Mr. Minister, who recognize that an increase in minimum wage, as a matter of fact, increases the disposable income that's spent in the communities in which they operate? Have you had any of that kind of input at all, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, small-business people, for the most part, do pay more than the minimum wage. Our minimum wage is at a minimum, and the business people who can afford to pay more are encouraged to do so, and most of them do that. So people who can pay more are paying more, and we wouldn't want to have the wage too high as to put people out of business and lose the jobs that we now have. So there has to be a very delicate balancing act.

Mr. Chairman, the opposition never uses the word responsibility. To them responsibility is a dirty word such as work, profit, and prosperity. Those are all dirty words to the members opposite. But a government has the responsibility to try to balance what is good for society and people in the long run. And in the short run, you can have short-term gain but we want long-term gain; therefore, Mr. Chairman, we will move when appropriate to increase the minimum wage. Hopefully the economy will develop in such a way that minimum wage will not be a major factor.

The member opposite has already stated that there are 30,000 people that are depending on the minimum wage, and then in the next breath he changed his mind and said, no, there are 50,000 people. The member opposite doesn't know how many people are on minimum wage. We have an approximation, but we don't know how many of those people rely on that wage as their chief source of income and how many of those use it as their second income. We also don't know how many of those people are actually high school students who are topping up the income that basically their families already have.

So it's an area of government regulation that you have to move in very carefully because there is a responsibility for the government to do what is right with respect to society as a whole. Members opposite have simple solutions and never consider that responsibility.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I assume your definition of moving very carefully is to increase minimum wage by 25 cents every seven and a half years. That's been your

record, Mr. Minister. You and I both know that there is some 15 to 20,000 people working at minimum wage in the province of Saskatchewan; then a large number that depend on minimum wage to determine what their income will be, and that number in total, added to those who are making minimum wage will come down somewhere between 30 and 50,000 — I believe it's closer to the 50,000 than 30. It's a debatable point, and for the purposes of our conversation here today, it's irrelevant.

Mr. Minister, I don't believe that small-business people, family business people in the province of Saskatchewan would mind working people having a little more disposable income in their pockets. And based on your answers here today, I find that your approach to minimum wage is equivalent to the Minister of Finance on potash; you have no plans is essentially what you're saying — charging ahead recklessly with this rosy future that people of Saskatchewan are somehow supposed to have confidence in you when you have no plans.

Mr. Minister, I will conclude this portion of the estimates by simply saying that on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, I'm disappointed in your response to the questions about minimum wage. My colleague from Saskatoon Centre would like to address some questions related to the seniors' division of your department, Mr. Minister.

Ms. Smart: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, first of all, just looking at the Saskatchewan income plan, the last increase in the Saskatchewan income plan was in November of 1988, and I understand there are no plans for this fiscal year to increase the rates. Your department apparently sent out letters in September of 1986 to seniors announcing that there would be increases over the next three years, but nothing much has happened except that increase in November of 1988.

Mr. Minister, statistics from your own department show that in 1986 the average income for people 70 years of age and over in Saskatchewan was \$12,000 — 12,989 to be exact. That was in 1986. This is now 1989 and while there may have been an increase in the income for people age 70 and over, I'm sure it has not been that great.

And we know, Mr. Minister, that the number of people who are ageing in Saskatchewan is increasing and that you have more people age 65 and over now than you did in '86. Mr. Minister, what is your response to the request that the Saskatchewan income plan be increased?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased that the member from Saskatoon Centre asked that question. It gives me the opportunity to clearly set out for the people of Saskatchewan the fact that the NDP government had a Saskatchewan income plan payment to senior citizens of \$25 per month, which this government has raised to \$80 per month — more than a threefold increase for a single senior citizen.

I'm also pleased to advise you, Mr. Chairman, that there are only 26,000 senior citizens who qualify for and are indeed in the Saskatchewan income plan. It's based on need, of course, topping up people

who have no other income whatsoever — maybe a little bit of income, but basically no other income. And out of 134,000 senior citizens, only 26,000 are in need of a Saskatchewan income supplement, which is the percentage of senior citizens who are self-sufficient, living off of their savings, living off of their investments, living off of their profits — the dirty words that the members opposite can't stand to hear. There are only 26,000 seniors who are in need of this particular program, but I'm pleased to see the numbers each year are going down.

Other senior citizens have been able to benefit from the Saskatchewan Pension Plan, where they have been able to, with the government, save for their retirement. Others have been able to benefit from their savings on the profits that they've made in the last seven years under a Conservative government in this province, and therefore fewer and fewer senior citizens rely on the government to support them in their retirement. And I congratulate these senior citizens for becoming self-sufficient.

So while we have tripled the amount paid, I don't really see where the members opposite can criticize considering that they paid a mere \$25 per senior citizen.

Ms. Smart: — Mr. Minister, the senior citizens are living on very low incomes, whether you want to accept it or not. Your own statistics for 1988 show that 20 per cent of the seniors in Saskatchewan are receiving the SIP (Saskatchewan income plan) plan, and that their average income per person is \$9,000; the average income for couples is \$14,500, and that's well below the poverty line, Mr. Minister.

I want to compare that with the heritage grant program, because you've talked about how seniors are living off their profits, and how this bottom-line income of the Saskatchewan income plan plus the old age security and the GIS (guaranteed income supplement) from the federal government is available only to a few. Twenty per cent of the people in Saskatchewan of the senior citizens are getting it, according to your own statistics. But then you go on to make this quantum leap, that other seniors are fine because they're living on their profits and their dividends, and all the rest of it that you fantasize they have.

Your own minister in charge of the seniors' directorate has said that almost three-quarters of the seniors in Saskatchewan qualify for the heritage grant, and I want to tie that to people on low income. Three-quarters of the people in Saskatchewan, according to your own department, qualify for the heritage grant, and yet you decreased the amount of money that's in the heritage grant this year. When I questioned you about that, you said seniors were richer this year than they were last year, and that's not substantiated by any facts.

Seniors are ageing and as they get older, they get into lower income brackets, especially older women, and yet you've decreased the amount in the heritage grant. You've also taken away the administrative costs so the amount of money that's available to the heritage grant is way down, and the seniors are concerned about this, Mr. Minister. What do you have to say to that?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I am sick. The members opposite make me sick, Mr. Chairman. I can't believe this. Let me go through this one more time, very slowly, so that the members opposite can understand this. Maybe if I repeat the answer as many times as they repeat their questions, they might understand this. I mean, good heavens, what are the qualifications to get elected to this place?

The rule is, Mr. Chairman, the rule is that if your income is over \$30,000, you don't qualify for the heritage program. The second rule is, Mr. Chairman, the second rule that if your income is over 25,000, you qualify for half the senior heritage program. The fact that more seniors do not qualify means, number three, more seniors are making more money. If more seniors are making more money, is that a bad thing? No, I submit.

(0930)

Will the member listen carefully? If fewer citizens qualify for the heritage program because more citizens are making more money, therefore without changing the rules, you will pay out less money because it is a mathematical calculation. It doesn't take calculus; it simply takes arithmetic.

Now if you want me to give you that explanation one more time, stand up and tell me you still don't understand it.

Ms. Smart: — Mr. Minister, the population is ageing. The statistics show that over the age of 65 people's incomes go down. Your own statistics show that many, many people in Saskatchewan over the age of 65 are living below the poverty line. Your own department has said that three-quarters of the seniors qualify for that grant. And yet, you reduced the money available to them.

The reason that you're not getting the applications, although the applications are up from . . . in 1987 to '88, 71,000 grants were provided; in 1989, at the senior citizen conference in Prince Albert, your own deputy minister said 75,000 cheques were issued last year. That's an increase in the number of people applying for the heritage grant, and yet you decrease the money.

Now what you're doing is you're hiding that grant from people. They're not informed about it properly. They're not getting their access to the money that they're entitled to. And with the increase in school taxes and the increase in property taxes, and the increase in the cost of supplies to senior citizens, and the increase in utility rates, and all the other taxes and costs that you've heaped on the people of Saskatchewan — your government's heaped on the people of Saskatchewan — they need that income, Mr. Minister. They need that income, and that grant should be increased in your budget, not decreased.

Now, Mr. Minister, in the interests of time, I want to turn to another issue regarding income for senior citizens and quickly ask you about your position and your position to the Premier of this province regarding the federal government's plan to claw back the old age security program. Now you will know that the seniors who advise

you, including Ted Azevedo, have said that they don't want that claw-back on the federal pension plan. Their position is that that's a universal program, a basic senior citizen pension for people over the age of 65, and that by the federal government introducing this claw-back clause, they are destroying that universality.

The senior citizens, Mr. Minister, are well prepared to recognize that there are a few seniors on high income, and their position is that those seniors on high income should pay taxes on that income and that would be part of the government's revenue. But by clawing back the old age security to people whose income is \$50,000 or over this time around, they are jeopardizing the universal program.

And they are also failing to recognize that people's income of \$50,000 includes a number of ways of generating that income, all of which are taxed differently. And that some people who declare a \$50,000 income may actually have less spending money than others. So it's unfair from the beginning, and it's particularly unfair in destroying the old age security program itself. Because once the standard is set at \$50,000 income, the standard two years down the road can be lowered to \$40,000 income and so the erosion takes place.

The seniors, Mr. Minister, are very concerned about that. And my question to you specifically is: what position have you taken on it? What representation have you made to the Premier to bring to the Premier's conference that's going on now, to the federal government? What representation have you made to the federal government on that issue?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, can you believe this? I mean, just listen to the question. Can you believe this? The party that screams over there, tax the rich, says don't tax senior citizens who make more than \$40,000 a year. These are people who don't have children to raise. These are people who can, I believe, live comfortably on their \$50,000 per year. I don't believe, Mr. Chairman, that the old NDP out there making more than \$50,000 are refusing to pay taxes because they don't think they're rich. If a senior citizen has an income in excess of \$50,000 a year, they should pay taxes like everybody else.

And I can't believe that the NDP, who clamour and scream to tax the rich, say now don't tax the senior citizens who have incomes over \$50,000 a year. I can tell you that the Conservative and Liberal senior citizens out there with incomes over \$50,000 a year are prepared to pay their fair share of taxes and have not one of them has complained to me about having to pay their fair share of taxes if they have incomes over \$50,000 a year. Would the members opposite please talk to all those old CCFers (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) out there and those old NDP, who think that if their income is over \$50,000 a year, they are still poor.

Ms. Smart: — Will the minister please answer my question which is specifically what your position is regarding the claw-back of the old age security pension?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, our position is that

people who have adequate incomes should pay taxes to help support the health care system, the social services, the highways, and all the other things that are dear to all of us, including the senior citizens who make more than \$50,000 a year. I know they, like many other people, feel that the tax burden is getting quite high, but they also realize that they want the health care, they want the services, and you have to pay for these things if you want them.

Ms. Smart: — Mr. Minister, I've made the point that the seniors on high incomes are quite prepared to accept taxation. They are not prepared to accept the claw-back of the old age security which undermines their universality. And I'm not surprised that you can't even understand that concept or address it, because it's one that you want to sweep under the rug. But it's not going to be swept under the rug by the senior citizens, Mr. Minister.

I have one more question to you regarding the grants to the seniors' centres, senior citizen activity centres. These grants have not been increased this year or last year, despite the fact that the insurance rates are high, the cost of utilities has increased, the janitor fees need to be increased so that they can pay people well to maintain those centres. And that is a major concern for the seniors, that you have not increased the grants to their own senior citizen activity centres where they have an opportunity to gather and to enjoy their company in their retirement years.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I'm very proud of our senior citizens and the way they operate their centres in Saskatchewan. Twenty per cent of them did not require any grant at all because they have money in the bank. Eighty per cent of them required some assistance from the government, and this was a sharing process where the government assists them in operating centres. And the senior citizens realize that when revenues are down for the government and expenditures are up — revenues were up 5 per cent last year, expenditures were up 10 per cent, most of that on health care which is very dear to senior citizens — they realized that the priorities should be in health care and education, rather than in buying new furniture for senior citizens' centres.

So they have been very, very co-operative in that area. They have become self-sufficient in their centres. And I believe that we should encourage all elements of society to become self-sufficient. Twenty per cent are fully self-sufficient; the other 80 per cent receive assistance and will continue to do so.

Ms. Smart: — Well the seniors will be insulted to think that what you think they want the money for is to buy new furniture, when they're talking about just covering their basic expenses, as I pointed out.

I've one more question for you, Mr. Minister. In the last annual report that you gave us, which is 1987 to '88, so it's some time ago, you mentioned that you have a standing interdepartmental co-ordinating committee on ageing, SICCOA, which co-ordinates and provides an overview of policy and program developments across government. And I want to ask you, who is on that

committee and how often they meet.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, the full committee last met in January of 1988. We find that it hasn't been necessary for the committee to be as active in the past because things are working well. My directorate is doing specific work with other departments rather than an overall general approach through the committee. So the directorate has taken over the role of this committee and has co-ordinated specific initiatives with other government departments. In effect we've reduced bureaucracy here and the results are better than what they have been in the past.

Ms. Smart: — I asked you, who was on that committee, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Your question was so brief that it went right by me. I'm used to these long questions. Could you just repeat it for me?

Ms. Smart: — I said, who was on that committee?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, this committee, this standing interdepartmental co-ordinating committee on ageing is no longer as essential as it once was, because the Senior Citizens' Provincial Council has been providing me with a lot of advice and good counsel in the last year or so. I've met with them on several occasions, and they have had very good input.

Specifically answering your question of who was involved in the standing interdepartmental co-ordinating committee on ageing, was the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower, Consumer and Commercial Affairs, Co-operation and Development, Culture and Recreation, Employment Development Agency, Executive Council, Finance, Health, Indian and Native Affairs Secretariat, Justice, Labour, Northern Secretariat, Parks and Renewable Resources, Public Service Commission, Rural Development, Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, Saskatchewan Telecommunications Corporation, Saskatchewan Transportation Corporation, Social Services, Urban Affairs, and the women's secretariat.

We find that they last met in January of 1988 and that the committee is rather large, and we've dealt with the problems specifically and have received good advice from the provincial council of senior citizens. So the committee is not as essential as we once felt it was.

Ms. Smart: — Well, the co-ordination of services between your different departments is still very essential, Mr. Minister. In the interests of time I won't go into the details regarding such things as the transportation grant, etc. I just want to point out that the seniors continue to have concerns about the consultation and the co-ordination of services to them, and it's obvious by your actions that you are restricting yourself and cutting back on this process which is very necessary in order to provide good services for seniors.

Mr. Goulet: — Yes, I'm just trying to get some clarification, Mr. Minister, in regards to certain things, a bit of the changes that have taken place in the past three,

four years in regards to employment and Indian and Metis people.

First of all, as I was reviewing the historical development . . . of course, Bill 5 had made it possible for you to change whatever department and organizations within department, and you shifted things around quite a bit in the past couple of years. Now as I was reviewing the estimates, I looked at the native career development program and employment development program back in '86-87 and I notice that there were under the estimates . . . they had estimated approximately 1.270 million, and the actual expenditures were 1.338 million at that time.

(0945)

Now when I checked out the figures for '87-88, the actual figure had dropped 1.338 million. When I combined the native career development program and employment development program it had dropped to \$747,591 on the actual Public Accounts. It was a drop of 41 per cent.

Now in '88-89, of course, the estimates were the same. And then I was looking at '89-90 and I was trying to figure out exactly what the amounts were and what the specific amounts were last year in comparison to the estimates this year. Could you provide me with the detail on that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, no, I can't. That native career development program is part of the Indian Affairs Secretariat for which the Minister of Highways is responsible. And so I don't have that information available today. I suppose the minister responsible could provide that material, or you could ask that question in question period and he could take notice and get you the information. So I'm sorry I can't give you that information today.

Mr. Goulet: — I might just say, Mr. Minister, therefore I will be asking the questions, I will be referring the questions then to the minister in charge when his estimates do come up, and the Minister of Highways, I would imagine, will be coming up the following week.

I might just add that the, for the record, the minister, the portfolio for Indian and Native Affairs Secretariat used to be under your direction and so on, but I notice that the Premier took it away from you for whatever reason it was. I might add it may have been due to statements or it may have been due to the huge cut-backs that were made previously, but I'll just leave that for the record and do any of my questioning on a specific level to the Minister of Highways who is now in charge of Indian and Native Affairs Secretariat.

Ms. Simard: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I note from the budget that the women's directorate has been cut almost in half, from 700,600 in '88-89 to 395,400 in '89-90. I also understand that the staff has been reduced to seven staff positions from nine, Mr. Minister. Could you please tell me what the reason for these funding cuts is.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the communications subvote money was moved to another subvote which changes the amount in the budget, in the blue book. Also two clerical positions which were not being utilized to the fullest extent in this particular secretariat were moved to where the positions could be utilized more. We find that the women's directorate is operating very efficiently and is functioning very well with their current staff.

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Minister, when you say that money is moved, does that mean that is it not allocated then to the women's directorate?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, the major communications expenditures at the women's directorate are for Focus and Focus on Your Future which have been very successful publications in the women's directorate. They have gained accolades right across Canada, and I've had requests from departments and organizations right across Canada for copies of those publications.

Originally in the budget of this particular branch, when it was a separate directorate rather than part of the all encompassing Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, they had a separate budget for those matters. Their budget for communications is now part of the overall departmental budget for communications, and so we're really talking here about accounting practices rather than actual dollars expended.

Ms. Simard: — Well it makes it very difficult, Mr. Minister, for anyone to determine what your commitment is with respect to the women's directorate and the work that is envisaged that the women's directorate do when the funding is being cut in half and moved all over the place and put into general revenues with respect to the department. It gets very difficult to determine what your commitment is, Mr. Minister.

And I note that there has been a lot of reorganization over the years with respect to the women's directorate in your department. In 1982 there were some 18 positions, and now I understand it's down to seven, Mr. Minister — from 18 to seven positions. The women's directorate used to conduct research on a wide range of issues affecting women — day care, legal issues, women in prisons, the effects of the technological change on women, and so on. But, Mr. Minister, you appear to be just eroding and slowly eroding the functions of this department and the functions of the women who were employed in the women's directorate. That's what I see happening in your department.

And it's not good enough for you to say that, oh well, it's a part of the general overall department, because it gets lost, Mr. Minister, it gets lost then. And what we need from that department is meaningful research and a commitment on the part of your government to properly staff it and to set it apart with a meaningful and strong mandate.

Mr. Minister, with respect to women living in poverty, I simply wish to make the point that something like 56 per cent of one-parent families are headed by women who

are poor, and six in 10 children raised by a single parent mother is poor in this province, Mr. Minister. And something like 35.1 per cent of low income families are headed by women. So we have nearly 70 per cent of children living in female-headed, single parent families living in poverty, Mr. Minister. That's some 19,600 children. And between 1981 to '86 the number of poor children increased by some 12.8 per cent.

So, Mr. Minister, as women's critic for the opposition, I simply want to point out to you that many single mothers are earning minimum wage in Saskatchewan, and the minimum wage is a very grim wage and something like half the poverty level.

So the situation for single mothers earning minimum wage is very difficult, Mr. Minister, and it affects their children. It's not just the mother we're talking about, it's children as well. It's our future in Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, and I really believe that it's important for this government to take a look at that situation and ensure that these families are not in such financial straits.

I'm wondering how your government can explain, Mr. Minister, paying George Hill salaries and benefits of some \$200,000, for example; and about — what is it? — \$100,000 to Paul Schoenhals to ease the pain of his election defeat. I'm wondering how your government can do that, Mr. Minister, and in face of the statistics pertaining to children and single mothers and families living in poverty in this province.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, certainly it's of great concern to myself and this government that as many women as are, are living in single income families with low incomes. That is a great burden to them. There's several things that have to be done. Get the economy rolling through diversification, as I've indicated earlier, so that there will be more jobs for single parents.

We now have child care where 80 per cent of our child care budget is spent on single parents. We are trying to do everything to alleviate their problems. However, the fact is that as single parents, they do not have two income families. One of the things that we have to do is crack down on fathers. I don't know if you call them single fathers, because they seem to be off and about — single, but they're really not fathers; they're only biological fathers — and we have to crack down on fathers who have responsibility towards their children and their former spouses. We intend to do that in a greater way.

I really don't see how George Hill and Paul Schoenhals are involved in this matter. Maybe it's just for political grandstanding that the member opposite raises their names, but I can say that George Hill and Paul Schoenhals, as many other people who have been hired to management in this government, have more than earned their income in the returns they have made to the province with respect to the money they have been able to save through better management and efficiency. And you certainly have to pay a high enough wage to attract the people who can get the job done.

That's one of the problems I have in government is that

because of our egalitarian notions that everyone should be paid the same and the ideas of the members opposite that no one is worth more money than anyone else, I can't attract as good as managers as I'd like to. I have a deputy minister here who took a cut in pay to take this job. That is an indication of devotion. But our rules don't allow me to pay my deputy minister what he was making with a private company before he came to work for the government.

So not only do politicians sacrifice in their personal lives, but there are civil servants who sacrifice in their personal lives because good people like the people I have surrounding me here can make more and were making more in private industry where their talents are adequately compensated. Fortunately, these people are driven by higher motivations than pure money.

An Hon. Member: — Didn't Louise used to work for the government?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — One of my members opposite reminds that the member who asked this question used to also at one time work for the provincial government, and I don't know what she is saying. Is she saying to us that . . . If she's suggesting that Mr. Hill and Mr. Schoenhals are incompetent because they are Conservatives? Is she admitting that she was incompetent because she was an NDP at that time? Would she get this discussion out of the gutter and stick to the topic at hand? That is what is essential here, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Simard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, with respect to George Hill, Mr. Hill is making a very handsome salary. As you know, he's past president of the PC Party, and we also know, Mr. Minister, that what Mr. Hill is doing is attempting to privatize one of the major Crown corporations in this province against the wishes of 70 per cent of the population, and the taxpayers are paying him over \$200,000 a year to do it, Mr. Minister, and that's why it's an issue. At the same time, we have single parent mothers and children living in poverty in this province at unprecedented rates, Mr. Minister.

Now with respect to battered women, I notice that transition housing, the increases have been very minimal, Mr. Minister. From '88-89 budget to '89-90, we're looking at Saskatoon Interval House, 2.8; Regina Transition, 2.3; Isabel Johnson, 2.1; Moose Jaw, 3.9; P.A., 2.1; Battlefords, 1.6; 3.8 for Yorkton; and La Ronge, 1.7. That's the information I have, Mr. Minister. Those increases do not even meet the rate of inflation, Mr. Minister.

I also understand that there's federal funding that still exists for another 13 emergency spaces. I want to know whether the minister is going to approve operating funds for additional emergency spaces in the province in order to cash in on the federal funding?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, federal funding is not always what people make it out to be. The federal government are prepared to pay for bricks and mortar, and thereafter have the provincial government pay the operating costs for ever and a day, and there are only so many operating costs we can pay.

Last year we chose to put an extra \$130 million into health in this province, and an extra \$52 million into education in this province. That is a clear choice that we have made, a priority to allocate the money that we didn't even have, but we had to spend it.

(1000)

And so as soon as the member opposite can tell us which tax should be raised, then we will spend the money on the priorities that she believes it should be spent on, but we feel that the services to women have been increased nearly threefold under this government. And there are periods when you can afford to expand and there are periods when you have to put the money into health and education and into other social services, and we've tried to put money into raising the wages of the workers at group homes. We've tried to put money into improving the foster care program.

And I might point out to the member opposite, who is a lawyer as I am and I know that she can clearly do arithmetic, contrary to what some of the other members over there can't do, and that she could add up the situation. And when your expenditures are increasing at 10 per cent per year and your income is increasing at 5 per cent per year, you have to be very careful with your expenditures.

And the services to women have continued, have improved. I read in the paper two years ago, such outrageous lies as things had been cut off, which is not the case. And when you get right down to the facts, this was the government who in this year's budget allocated another facility for Swift Current. So we were spreading the services around the province as fast as possible. And there's a limit to what you can do in any given year, and we'll try to do as much as possible in the future.

Ms. Simard: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, you indicated that if we could tell you what tax to raise, you'd have more money to spend and that when expenditures are outstripping revenues, that the money simply isn't there. And that's a valid comment, Mr. Minister. However I wish to point out that it isn't simply a question of raising taxes. There are other ways that government money can be spent . . . or can be saved. For example . . .

An Hon. Member: — Cuts.

Ms. Simard: — No. Cancel your \$9 million birthday party, Mr. Minister. Clean up your GigaText scandal and your GigaText affair that's costing the taxpayers of this province some \$5 million, Mr. Minister. Cut your patronage — George Hill, \$200,000 a year to privatize a Crown corporation that nobody in this province except Tories want privatized, Mr. Minister. Cut your patronage.

Cut your waste and mismanagement. Cut your privatization agenda that is costing jobs in this province for many, many young people who are fleeing the province in unprecedented numbers. And when people leave the province, Mr. Minister, it means less revenue for the provincial coffers in terms of income tax.

Mr. Minister, there's a lot of ways that can save money in this province for programs like transition homes, for the development of women, for health care, and for other social programs — a lot of ways, Mr. Minister, besides raising taxes. And it's about time that this government realized that the way it has governed this province has created a situation in Saskatchewan where we cannot afford many of the social programs that we used to enjoy because of your incompetence and your mismanagement, Mr. Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — I want to make two more point in closing and that is the fact that the wage gap between men and women, Mr. Minister, is increased as I am advised. And women's full-time wages dropped something like 2.5 per cent in comparison to men's wages in Saskatchewan from 1977 to '87, and in '87 a female full-time worker earned on the average 66.3 per cent of what men earned.

Now we have debated in this legislature at some length the pros and cons of pay equity, Mr. Minister, and we've had that discussion over a period of time. And I will ask the minister to comment as to whether or not he has reconsidered his position with respect to pay equity and would be prepared to look at a broader concept of pay equity being implemented in the province.

The other point I wish to make before I sit down, Mr. Minister, is the fact that I have in my hands here a brief from the Saskatchewan Association of Women and the Law who are very clearly stating and present a very sound and logical case against for-profit child care programs in the province — commercial child care services.

They indicate that a parliamentary special committee on child care showed that 77 argued against, against for-profit child care centres. They indicate that in commercial operations, the minimum standards set out in the day care regulations in all probability will be the maximum. And the profit motive is inconsistent with providing high quality child care.

I think that . . . they also go on to say that experience in other jurisdictions where for-profit child care services are licensed is not encouraging. Complaints and violations, complaints about violations of regulations and non-compliance with the minimum standards are much higher for for-profit centres. These reports indicate that commercial child care services will be expensive to monitor in order to promote compliance with minimum standards. In other words, they are making a case against for child profit commercial . . . pardon me, for-profit child care commercial centres, you know, as distinct of course from the small neighbourhood family home. And, Mr. Minister, I'm just going to urge you to consider the comments of these women and consider the comments of the Saskatchewan Association of Women and the Law in that regard.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well I will consider those. I think the member opposite and the people who are opposed to any kind of commercial child care centres are first of all getting overly concerned because I don't think we will

have a large number of them, considering that the so-called non-profit child care centres are so heavily subsidized, I doubt if anyone could compete with them in the market. But I don't want to absolutely ban and outlaw commercial child care centres because I believe a little bit of competition is healthy, and the people who cry wolf here, I believe, fear competition more than they fear lack of adequate child care.

What we have is a greater demand, according to members opposite, for child care than there is a supply. Yet we just opened a child care — and I'll give a free commercial to this child care — a brand-new child care, Transcona child care geared up for, I believe, 40 students, or 40 children, and they've come to me with a problem that they only had I believe seven or 11 registered in the first two weeks.

So I say when there is apparently, allegedly such a great demand, that people should take their children to the new Transcona child care which is in a building subsidized by the provincial government, where parents qualify for subsidy, where, if the members opposite and the advocates tell me there's such a great demand, and I've believed them up until now, there's a child care and a brand-new one that isn't full. So I would encourage people to use that new child care, and when that's full, then we'll build some more.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, can you tell me who the acting director of the occupational health and safety branch is?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — The acting director is Myles Morin.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, is that the same Myles Morin that was the former PC MLA for North Battleford, continuing that unbelievable phenomenon that we see in this province, down goes a Tory and up pops a job; is that the same Myles Morin, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, this is the same Myles Morin who in the 1970s worked for this same department and is now again working for the same government department that we worked in when the NDP were government. Surely if he was incompetent, the NDP would have dismissed him in the 1970s. It seems to me, now that he has become a cabinet minister and showed his leadership ability, because he was a cabinet minister in a Conservative government, now all of a sudden he's incompetent to work in the same department in which he worked in the 1970s.

Can the member opposite explain why they hired an incompetent man; or will they acknowledge that he was competent in the 1970s, is now more mature, more experienced, has been a cabinet minister, and is more competent to work in the same department in the 1980s?

In addition, there was a vacancy due to the untimely death of an individual in pensions. It so happens that Mr. Myles Morin was a minister responsible for the implementation of the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. It so happens that he had some expertise in this area, and when this vacancy occurred by the untimely death, Mr. Morin was suited to fill that position. He filled that

position at a salary \$8,000 per year less than the incumbent was receiving. So by hiring Mr. Morin to fill that position, the government saved \$8,000.

Mr. Morin filled that position so successfully that when a vacancy occurred for director of occupational health and safety, we placed Mr. Morin, at the request of my department, in an acting role there. He now is the director of pensions and the acting director of occupational health and safety, which because he is filling two jobs, Mr. Morin has replaced two people at present. I don't know if he can continue with that work-load, but he is not only now saving the government \$8,000 per year, he is now saving the government approximately \$60,000 per year.

If you want me to put Mr. Morin back as director of pensions and pay him what the other person was receiving, it will cost an extra \$8,000 there, and we will have to hire a new acting director, and that will cost another approximately \$55 or \$60,000. So if you don't want Mr. Morin to replace two people, let me know and the taxpayers can waste \$60,000 that we're not spending right now.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I'm sure that Mr. Morin will take interest in your reflections about his incompetence. However, I'll leave that for others who may be more knowledgeable about the specifics to decide.

Mr. Minister, it's kind of an interesting explanation, a bit of a defensive explanation I must add. The rationale you use is somewhat equated to the person who would buy something on sale and concentrate on how much they saved, and by buying even more on sale they saved even more, which makes it just all that much wiser an expenditure. You claim, Mr. Minister, that somehow he's saving the province \$60,000. How much is he costing the province, Mr. Minister? What's his salary?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well I will give the total figures here, Mr. Chairman, so that anybody who can do arithmetic can calculate the net saving to the province as we stand today. The incumbent, who died suddenly in his office, or in his position, was receiving \$68,000 per year. Mr. Morin was hired at \$60,000 per year. And now because he's assumed the role, in addition, of acting director of occupational health and safety, receives \$66,000 per year. He is replacing an individual that was paid in that position, \$76,000 per year.

Mr. Morin now holds down two positions for which he is paid \$66,000 per year, replacing the two incumbents who were paid \$68,000 and \$76,000 per year. So I would submit there's a net saving, as we speak today, of \$78,000 per year to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, and I only hope that Mr. Morin can continue to fill both of these positions for quite a long time because we can certainly use that saving. I think if you add it up, he is being paid \$66,000 a year for two positions; we are saving \$78,000 per year under the current arrangement.

I make no apologies for Mr. Morin who worked in this department while you were government, and you would know the competence of people hired because you yourself were paid an honorarium from the Department of Education before you were elected while the NDP

were government. So I'm not denying that you weren't competent at the time. Why are you denying that this man who worked as one of your colleagues at the time is not competent? Come on, be fair and reasonable for once.

Are you suggesting that a person like myself, who was a prosecutor — not on pay, but on contract — while you were government, was not competent, and that as soon as I joined the Conservative party, I became incompetent and you cut off my prosecutions? It had cost me over \$50,000 to quit the NDP, and I knew it would cost me that. But as a matter of principle, I could no longer remain with your party.

(1015)

When it cost me over \$50,000 to quit your party, because as soon as I became a Conservative I was no longer competent, are you telling me that Mr. Morin, because he became a Conservative is no longer competent? Be realistic. Are you suggesting that myself, who would be a solicitor for the Department of Justice, would not be competent to work in the Department of Justice? Be realistic. I mean, you can make your arguments and your political arguments, but be realistic.

Constantly you people suggest that because someone is a Conservative he is not competent, but because someone is a social democrat, they are competent to do anything. And I have a list here that goes on for about 50 pages of social democrats that your government deemed competent to work for the government. I am pleased to say that we now have fewer civil servants, and that could be because some of your friends no longer work for this government.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, that is one of the most defensive answers I've ever heard to a straightforward question. In the last few minutes there's one member in this House that's used the word "incompetence" in respect to Mr. Morin and that's yourself, Mr. Minister. I wasn't asking about his competence. And if you have questions, you may want to look at that and I'll leave it to others to decide. I'm simply asking what he's paid, Mr. Minister.

Let me ask you as well, Mr. Minister, how long will he be serving in this money-saving position that he's been provided? And what benefits, Mr. Minister, is he receiving in addition to his \$66,000 a year annual salary?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — He gets the standard benefits, Mr. Chairman. The member opposite want to languish in the gutter, drag politics into things. The member opposite should look in his own family. The member opposite should look in his own family and look at himself. He should look in a mirror and see if he can honestly say the he and his family, his relatives have always been fair to the people of Saskatchewan. He knows what I'm talking about. He should look at his own family.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, this gets curiouser and curiouser. I'm simply asking a straightforward question, and I would appreciate it if you wouldn't mind just getting to the question. If you want to cast aspersions on Mr. Morin, I suppose that's your prerogative to do that. I

simply ask, Mr. Minister, what other benefits he's receiving and what's the term of his appointment?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not going to calculate the other benefits. He gets the same benefits as every other civil servant. I mean, look it up in the contracts. He gets the same benefits. What's the term of his office? The same as everybody else. He's in office until he quits or gets fired. That's the same term as everybody else. So I don't really see anything unusual about this.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, it does get curiouser and curiouser. But let's just take a look at a few items related to the division that Mr. Morin is charge of. Mr. Minister, in the occupational health and safety branch there are some interesting numbers that I think just bear a little reflection. In 1986-87, the most recent year for which I've been able to acquire the numbers, Mr. Minister, there was some \$6,800 collected for violations of occupational health and safety. That's all, in all of 1986-87, in the whole year, only \$6,800 collected for violations of occupational health and safety requirements in all of Saskatchewan. Now, Mr. Minister, I am pleased to note that in this budget, you're increasing the number of occupational health and safety offices from nine to 12. I don't know if those are all in place yet, but I hope so.

But I note with interest, Mr. Minister, that the same year '86-87, there were \$174,166 collected in fines for violation of wildlife protection laws. Mr. Minister, in 1986-87, there were some 200 wildlife enforcement officers who were protecting the wildlife in the province of Saskatchewan. You're proposing this year to increase to 12 the number of people who are protecting the safety of working people in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I note it does get curiouser and curiouser, Mr. Minister. It is an odd balance when we collect 25 times as much money in fines for violation of wildlife protection laws than for violation of occupational health and safety protections for the working people in the province of Saskatchewan. It is an interesting comment as well, Mr. Minister, when we assign some 200 people to protect wildlife and enforce those laws, and you're now increasing it to 12 to protect the application of the occupational health and safety enforcement in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, I'll leave that to you and others to reflect on the wisdom of that and whether that's the proper balance that we ought to have in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, I note as well that in 1988-89 . . . or sorry, in 1987-88 that the number of occupational health and safety inspections dropped down to 1,989 from the previous year where there were 2,697 inspections — a decrease of some 26 per cent. You many want to comment on what it was in the past year. That number has not been made available.

I note as well, Mr. Minister, that in previous questions to you, you indicated that contrary to the law of the land which says that every work place that has more than 10 employees, 10 or more employees, there must an

occupational health and safety committee; that, as a matter of fact, your government, Mr. Minister, is only enforcing . . . is not, as a matter of fact, enforcing that legislation; that only about 40 per cent of the work places that are required by law — required by law — to have occupational health and safety committees where employers, management, and employees work together in the interest of safety of the work place — and that your government is simply not enforcing that — some only 40 per cent of those work-forces required by law to have a committee, in fact, have one.

Mr. Minister, I note as well that your department has been required repeatedly by a number of occupational health and safety committees to provide copies of the Act, the law of the land, and the regulations, the specifics to interpret the law of the land, and that they are denied.

And I guess, again I wonder, Mr. Minister, what that indicates about your government's commitment to occupational health and safety when you do not provide at no cost . . . I mean, let's be honest here. Employees and employers are all paying income tax. It goes to the operating of government . . . you have legislation that says, every work place that has 10 or more employees must have an occupational health and safety committee, and yet you refuse to provide the copies of the Act itself and the regulations to those committees without them paying for them specifically, and that strikes me as bit odd, as a statement of your commitment to safety in the work place, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, also it's reported to me that nowhere near the 100 per cent of work places that are required by again by your government to have a work place hazardous material information system operative and in place by February 28 of this year, that nowhere near the 100 per cent, again required by your legislation, have got the WHMIS (work place hazardous materials information system) program in effect. And again we have to question your commitment to occupational health and safety as required by an Act that was approved with 100 per cent support by both sides of this legislature.

Mr. Minister, I note that you are paying some attention to occupational health and safety. You saw fit to form a review committee, which received briefs, presentations earlier this year; received them in private for some unknown reason, Mr. Minister. You and I both know that when the committee was holding its hearings that people who were presenting briefs to those hearings were not permitted to listen in to what other people were saying or were recommending by way of changes and improvements in occupational health and safety protection in the province of Saskatchewan, and in fact the media were barred from those hearings as well, Mr. Minister.

And so I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you would mind just explaining, as a result of your commitment to occupational health and safety led by the, I assume competent, although you raise some doubts, leadership of Myles Morin in occupational health and safety, I wonder if you would explain, Mr. Minister, just why it is that when you undertook to have a committee to review The Occupational Health and Safety Act, regulations,

practices of your government, invited people to make representation, why it is that you saw fit that those who were making representation couldn't hear what anybody else had to say, and why the media was barred from those hearings? Could you please provide for me an answer as to why that was done, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well I'll try to answer all your questions. First of all, I didn't know you were talking about when you were talking about wildlife enforcement. It took me a while to figure out what you were talking about. Then I realized that you were spouting the CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) line that there are many more wildlife enforcement officers than there are occupational health and safety officers. And really I don't really see the logic in comparing animals and people, the enforcement of rules with respect to animals and people.

Clearly I can see that maybe CUPE was in error in that kind of logic, but I expected from a member of the Assembly better logic. So really, I think, you know, to compare animals and people, there's not much more of answer I can give you. They're just like . . . comparing apples and oranges is more similar, at least they're all fruits. But I mean, gee, to compare animals and people, it makes no sense, so I can't give you a further answer on it.

With respect to occupational health and safety, you did finally point out that there is a review being held, and we'll have to wait to see the results of the review. The decision to not have media and other presenters present at the committee hearing level was a decision of the committee. They made it for their own reasons. I can't deny that I don't agree with their decision, because members opposite, you know, have been grandstanding here for six months, and so we don't really need a committee that wants to get down to work having members of the opposition grandstanding for the benefit of the media. So I think their decision was wisely made and I don't fault them for that decision.

Now the reason the number of inspections went down last year or one year, and it has come back up again now, is that in that particular year we had two resignations in the department in that area, and three early retirements, and until we retrained new officers to fill those positions and proceed with the inspections, the number of inspections fell, so that's the logical explanation, and we are going to have a record number of officers in the field as soon as the new ones are hired and trained.

And so with the review of this particular area, we expect there to be a report and further action taken. So fatalities had dropped considerably in the last few years. Unfortunately, this year there seems to be a rash of carelessness, and in agriculture we've already lost eight farmers, and we've lost — I'll just do a quick calculation — 13 people in business and industry this year to fatalities, most of them road accidents, which are difficult to control. The number of injuries and time loss are down, and we'll try to improve the record in the future, and we should both hope that we are successful in achieving that.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, getting back to the secret public hearing that your review committee was holding. Mr. Minister, were there any general conclusions you'd

like to share with the Assembly today from those hearings? And I specifically ask as well if you will provide for me, as the Labour and Employment critic in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, a copy of the briefs that were submitted to that committee.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, when the council completes the report and I've had a chance to review it, the report will be made public and we'll send a copy to the member opposite as fast as possible.

Mr. Hagel: — I appreciate that, Mr. Minister, and will you provide the Labour and Employment critic in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan a copy of the briefs that were submitted to the secret public hearing?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, we've taken the position that the briefs are the property of the people who presented them. We'd be prepared to give the critic opposite a list of the people who presented briefs and he could contact them for copies of their briefs.

Mr. Hagel: — And by when will you provide that list to me, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — My officials advise that within a few days they could provide you with a list of the people who submitted briefs.

Mr. Hagel: — I assume a few is a single digit number something less than 10.

Mr. Minister, I would ask as well if you would provide for me a copy of the internal Workers' Compensation Board document which outlines the 18-point program related to the application of deeming in the Workers' Compensation Board, and also the same document which outlines how it is to be implemented. Mr. Minister, will you provide me a copy of that document, and if you wish to comment on how effective the application of the 18-point programs is working, I would appreciate that as well.

(1030)

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Workers' compensation is a separate board. Traditionally, ministers have tried to answer a few questions. I would have to call in the officers from workers' comp if we're going to get into detail. But which particular document was it that you wanted?

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, you will recognize that there has been stated by you to be a change in the application of deeming to make it more realistic and fair. And I understand that there is an "18-point" program that has been a directive within, outlining as to how that is to be applied. And I'm simply requesting a copy of that document to understand what the approach is of the Workers' Compensation Board. And also if you have any brief comment as to whether in your view it's an improved approach to dealing with deeming in the interest of fairness to injured workers.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Chairman, in the absence of the officials, I can't give you a specific answer.

If you would drop me a short letter requesting this information, we'll get it together for you and I'll send it to you. Your members opposite have written me many letters and I've tried to answer wherever practical. So if you'll just send me a reminder and I'll try to get that information for you.

As far as the deeming provision, it was a practice that had caused some problems and we're trying to make improvement there. It hasn't been as serious a problem in the last year as it was in prior years, so I feel that there's some progress being made.

But, as you know, in workers' compensation it's, as in other things, it's impossible to satisfy everyone. The board was set up many years ago as an independent board and tries to operate that way. And the most I can do is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Sorry, I can't hear the member opposite from his seat, but he could get up and ask the question next, if he wishes. I can only answer them one at a time.

With respect to the deeming provisions, we feel they're working better. What we will do is if you sent me your little letter, I'll review the whole area. As I was indicating, you can't please everyone in this area of workers' comp. The board tries to operate as independently as possible. And the most I can do as a minister is to ask them to reconsider something, and on occasions I ask them to reconsider these matters.

But in most cases when I get complaints from MLAs or constituents around the province on workers' comp, they haven't followed the process of finalizing all of their appeals. And an appeal is not complicated; they merely have to write a letter to the board asking for a further appeal. It's very seldom have they exhausted all of their appeals before they ask for me to intervene. In most cases I explain to them how they should proceed to appeal. And the complicated part is that they need some evidence that the board is wrong. They need their own doctor or a specialist to indicate that the evidence reflects an injury on the job or that they cannot work.

And it's a complicated area, not an exact science, in determining people's pain. The board tries their best; we will continue. It you send me a letter, I'll try to get you that information.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, I too am interested in seeing improved application of the deeming policy within the Workers' Compensation Board.

Mr. Minister, my request is already in writing; it's called *Hansard*. And I've made that request and I would simply ask that you direct one of your officials here to pick up a copy of *Hansard* tomorrow and to provide for me an outline as to the 18-point program regarding the application of deeming policy in Workers' Compensation Board. And I trust that won't be hard to deal with. It is on record and it is in writing and it is available to you.

Mr. Minister, is there any thought being given to changing the legislation related to The Workers' Compensation Act to provide for the possibility of payment of unemployment insurance and Canada Pension Plan

contributions on behalf of injured workers. Is there any thought being given to changes in the Act related to that?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well I could say in all honesty there is some thought being given to it; I can't say results. When you weigh the matters . . . I was giving my own personal input to the board members as to what I was thinking was fair, and it doesn't seem fair that where the workers are paying all of the premiums in this case . . . or the employers, and the workers do not pay the premiums directly, the employers argue that they are already paying workers' compensation and Canada Pension Plan disability benefits.

However I have made the argument that on the Canada Pension Plan the worker is paying half, and that I have asked them to consider the implications and do calculations of going . . . compromising in that they should only be considered half to the extent that the worker's already receiving the worker's share for the half the worker paid, but the employer should not pay twice. So I can say it's under consideration.

My own opinion is that this seems like a logical step, but I can't say that we're going to implement that immediately. We want to think about the implications of that a little further. But my feeling in fairness was that the employee who was paying half the Canada pension should get some credit for that half that they're paying.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, let me simply say that I think you're heading in the right direction, and keep on plugging. Being a man of determination, I am sure that you will see this social justice to its fruition. And if you want any support, I'd be happy to help in that regard.

Mr. Minister, when are you intending to appoint the next workers' compensation review committee? It's due to be appointed this year, as required, and I simply ask when you will be naming the members of that committee so it can begin its work for review of The Workers' Compensation Act once again.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, as soon as we get the chance to really consider the chairmanship of that committee. We've had a provincial court judge who has sat on the last four and has become very expertise in this area. And I have to approach this individual to see what his interest is in sitting on a fifth one.

However, I also have to weigh the merits of seeking a new chairperson so as to say, get some fresh blood on this committee at the chairman level. And I have to weigh these implications. I'm very satisfied with the work of the former chairman who acted under your government and under our government. We are satisfied with his work. So I don't want him to be discouraged or slighted in any way.

But I also want to consider the merits of a new chairperson, and of course there's disadvantages in that in that the new chairperson is not as experienced as the former one. But at some stage the world has to change. So I want to weigh that, and when we've got that question sorted out on whether there are suitable people who could act as chairpersons, other than the one that has

been chairperson for the last four committees, then we'll make the decision and we'll proceed.

Mr. Hagel: — By when do you anticipate making that decision, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — I can't say for certainty, but we'll try to do it before the year ends.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you and I had a bit of question and answer exchange back on July 14, when it was brought to the attention of this House that CPIC (Canadian Police Information Centre) information is being provided to the Workers' Compensation Board. That's the police computer information. And, Mr. Minister, according to the internal document that was tabled in this House at that time, the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board has made available to investigators, a number of items, of information that are included in the police computer, in CPIC, not all of which are only criminal records, etc., and that Workers' Compensation Board is classified by way of information purposes category (a) investigation, law enforcement, or administration of justice.

When I raised that with you, Mr. Minister, your response was this, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, I'm merely the minister with the responsibility of answering for that organization and we have only the power to change the board. But I do have information that on occasion the staff there has been threatened, and I believe that for the protection of the staff on occasion they have to call in some security.

We have a double duty here. We have a duty to the people of Saskatchewan, but we also have a duty to our employees to make, at workers' compensation, their work place a safe place to work. So if they receive a threat, they would have to call upon security.

Mr. Minister, that's your statement in response to why CPIC information needs to be made available to the Workers' Compensation Board. I'm not debating with you that there may on occasion be some threats. I can understand that that may happen.

But I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you are saying then to this House that if threats are made to workers' compensation employees that you do not report those to the police. If you do report them to the police, then I simply ask what you need CPIC information being made available to the Workers' Compensation Board for? And if you're not reporting those threats to the police, then, Mr. Minister, I simply ask, why not? That would seem to be the sensible way of dealing with that particular phenomenon, and certainly is not clear at all to me why CPIC information, which can easily be understood as an invasion of privacy, knowing that CPIC includes more information than criminal record. And I simply don't understand, Mr. Minister, why it's necessary to make that information available to the Workers' Compensation Board.

Your explanation implies that somehow you're doing

your own investigations. That strikes me as wrong and odd. If you aren't doing your own investigations, then I don't know why you would need that information. Mr. Minister, your explanation would be appreciated.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite gave the workers' compensation people an indication a few weeks ago that he wouldn't really be raising workers' comp in this estimates. And I don't mind answering a few questions, but if he wants details to get him to write me and I'll try to give you more information on it.

Basically, Mr. Chairman, honest people have nothing to hide, nothing to fear from what might be in the police computer. As far as I'm concerned, CPIC can print out whatever they got on me and you can table it here in the House here. Honest people have nothing to hide. Also people who have never been involved with criminal activity would not be in the computer and therefore, the average citizen is not particularly concerned about these matters.

I really don't know the details of how many threats they get, or why they need to check these matters out in detail on the threats. I can tell you that Workers' Compensation Board accesses that information very, very rarely, and I don't know if it's crucial that they have that information. We have to weigh whether it's more beneficial for society for them to have access than it's detrimental.

And I submit that since honest people have nothing to fear. There's very little detriment . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Honest people have no secrets that are stored in that computer. And people who've had records of violence or anything of that nature in the past, we just don't have a major concern.

I think really your thinking here is in the '60s; the idea of, you know, of liberties and that we have our total privacy. But I mean there was not nearly the privacy that people imagine. And I really don't know what this paranoia about privacy is about. I know that in the '60s there were people at the university that I went to university with were kind of paranoid about that the state was watching them and that maybe somebody knew they were taking drugs, things like that.

But basically I stand by the statement: honest people have nothing to hide. There's nothing wrong with this process. And unless you can convince me that there's some great detriment, we don't really intend to change it.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, I guess the issue is simply one of credibility. It would seem to me that an operation like the Workers' Compensation Board, which by its mandate is designed to provide financial security to workers, people of Saskatchewan who are injured on the job, does not require this kind of information. It's the kind of information that's intended for law enforcement. That's what it's intended for. And I simply do not see any justification at all to have that kind of information available to investigators at the Workers' Compensation Board.

How can that in any way be relevant to determining

whether a worker is eligible for compensation and what the amount of that compensation would be? I just don't understand the remotest possible interpretation as to why that might be relevant.

Your only explanation has been to assist with the investigation of threats which implies to me that the police aren't being consulted, which is an abrogation of your responsibilities to provide security to employees of the Workers' Compensation Board.

(1045)

My God, the Workers' Compensation Board should not be investigating those kinds of things; they should be turned over to the police. And the employees of the board should be provided protection by police not by the Workers' Compensation Board.

There simply is no way of justifying the need for that information to Workers' Compensation Board that I can understand, and I note that you haven't attempted to clarify that any. And I would simply ask that you would do the correct thing and that is to withdraw the access to CPIC information by Workers' Compensation Board.

Mr. Chairman: — Order. Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Muirhead: — I don't think the word that the member used should be used in this House, when he used the word, God, taking God's name in vain, in the House should be used.

Mr. Chairman: — I remind all members that, yes, there is regulations in the House that we use language that is acceptable. I never heard the statement, and I ask the member to continue with his questioning.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, let me continue then. First of all, I want to make it clear had I not intended to raise any workers' compensation questions with you in these estimates, I would have advised you of that, and I'm not sure just on what basis you chose to not have those officials here.

One final question there and then three more to wrap up, Mr. Minister, the estimates.

Related to workers' compensation, are there any thoughts being given to introducing an experience rating system for workers' compensation rates for Saskatchewan employers? It's a system that does not exist in Saskatchewan, in my view, should not exist, but does exist in some other provinces. And I wonder, Mr. Minister, if there is any thought being given to moving in that direction in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — The answer, Mr. Chairman, is no. We do have though a surcharge for some employers who have a poor safety record. I think it started a long time ago under the NDP government when the city of Regina had a poor safety record. The fact that they were surcharged several thousands of dollars — I think it was over a hundred thousand dollars — turned the city of Regina into a model employer.

And accidents cause pain, but they also cost the employer money, and so we will continue with the surcharge for those employers who have a very poor safety record. But in an insurance scheme, you have to spread the risk. So basically the answer is no, but we don't intend to stop the surcharging where they have a poor safety record.

Mr. Hagel: — I appreciate and concur with that answer, Mr. Minister. Thank you.

Just three final questions I would like to ask regarding Acts for which you are responsible. Mr. Minister, you had introduced the employment benefits Act in the previous session in 1988, had indicated it was planned to be introduced in this session but has not. And I simply ask, Mr. Minister, what your intentions are regarding the introduction of either the employment benefits Act that was introduced at one time, or some variation thereof, as a replacement for The Labour Standards Act which currently exists.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, we had intended to introduce the Act this session. The session got rather busy and lengthy and we haven't introduced it as yet. Whether we introduce the Act or not is a matter for consideration.

I notice that the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour is proudly boasting that they have stopped this Bill, and it's possible that they might have stopped this Bill because this Act had many benefits for employees, was generally beneficial to workers, did one or two things for employers that would not harm employees. The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour took it upon themselves to try to stop this Bill. We could pass it and they can't stop this Bill. But I have to weigh whether if the Saskatchewan Federation of labour goes around Saskatchewan lying about this Bill, whether it is worth the aggravation of helping employees that have the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour lie about the Bill and denounce it as not being appropriate. Maybe I should allow them to . . .

An Hon. Member: — Order, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Members opposite call for order.

An Hon. Member: — He used the word "lie" three times in the last paragraph.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — That's correct, Mr. Chairman. I used the word "lie" three times.

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. I'd ask members to refrain from using unparliamentary language.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, it is not unparliamentary to refer to the actual lies that are in the public.

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. I'd ask the member to withdraw that last statement, and I ask the member to refrain from using the word "lying or lie" in this House.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I withdraw any implications that anyone was lying in this Assembly.

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. I ask the member to withdraw the statement with an unequivocal apology to the House.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — I unequivocally apologize to the House, Mr. Chairman, for whatever I've done. I mean, I know not . . .

Mr. Chairman: — I have asked the member to withdraw the statement and apologize to the House, and I will accept nothing less.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, I withdraw the statement, I apologize to the House, and I ask for leave to continue.

Let me say to the members opposite that if we are proposing a Bill that is not appreciated by the people who speak for workers. And if that Bill, as I contend, does a lot for workers, it becomes questionable whether you should do this for workers when you receive no thanks from the people who suggest that they speak for workers. And does the loss of those benefits then hang upon the heads of those people who are practising politics ahead of what's good for the workers?

Now I cast no aspersions on the members opposite, because the members opposite have not led the charge. And I think they understand that the employment benefits Act benefits workers. Now despite the opposition out there by certain parties, this government has to make a decision whether we are going to implement these benefits for workers despite the opposition of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, or whether we say, all right, if the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour is against a Bill that helps workers, then maybe they should have their way.

I have to weigh what's best for workers, and if we have to put up with what I've seen in public in the last six months with respect to this Bill, Mr. Chairman, then it really is questionable whether the government should be firm and ram through this Bill for the workers, or whether the government should accept the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour's argument and not pass the Bill. And that is a decision we'll have to make. And we will see whether, despite the kind of opposition that has been out there — that I can't refer to specifically — that despite that kind of opposition, we may have to pass this Bill anyway. But we will give it some consideration.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, let me simply indicate to you that if it is your intention to proceed with the Bill, I would be happy to debate the merits and the demerits of the proposed Bill with you, as it was printed in June of 1988, and debate with you, including your own riding, Mr. Minister, as had been scheduled for us to do. Unfortunately you were not able to be there, but at any rate, Mr. Minister, I gather that you're still giving some thought to the introduction of that Bill, but that's not clear at best what your intentions are right now.

Mr. Minister, your intentions regarding either amendments to or a new occupational health and safety Act?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — The answer to your last question is we'll await the review and then see what the report is. With respect to the employment benefits Act, Mr. Chairman, the Bill is good for workers and brings in new benefits for workers that would make it the best Bill in Canada. And I have no doubt that that Bill is to the benefit of the employees of Saskatchewan.

And so we will, yes, consider implementation of this Bill, but if it's going to be misrepresented in the public by people who are more politically motivated than they are motivated towards the benefit of workers, then we have to weigh whether that kind of a debate in public is healthy for the workers in Saskatchewan and we'll have to weigh all the implications.

But certainly, the members opposite are disappointed because they believe only they can bring in a Bill that will help workers. When we bring in a Bill, they cannot tolerate it and behave in a conduct that is not befitting politicians in Saskatchewan. And we'll consider the employment benefits Act which I believe is good for workers.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Minister, I was not intending to get into a debate of the Bill in these estimates. You seem to want to do that. Let me simply put on record that in my view, after having taken a very close look at that Bill, it is: number one, regressive for workers; number two, unfair to scrupulous employers; and has a number of loopholes that you can drive a Mack truck through, Mr. Minister, that put unscrupulous employers at a distinct advantage over scrupulous employers, particularly in the tough economic times that we've got under your government now.

However, let's leave it at that. This is not to debate that, and that's not what I was asking. I gather then you're still giving some thought to introducing the employment benefits Act. I gather that you're intending to introduce amendments or a new occupational health and safety Act at some time. Minister nods to indicate yes.

And, Mr. Minister, finally then, one of the other major Acts under your jurisdiction in this department is The Trade Union Act. Do you have intentions to introduce amendments or a new trade union Act at some time in the foreseeable future, in this term of your office, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, we have drafted a modern trade union Act. Whether the agenda will be such that . . . this House has been grinding along so slowly, I don't know if it will be high enough on the priority list to get before the Assembly. It's possible that we might have a small amendment. The law as it now stands is quite inadequate; it was designed for the mid-1940s or maybe even the mid-1900s.

But employers and employees have in the last year or two realistically tried to work under the current law even with its flaws, and whether we introduce amendments at this stage or not is a difficult situation. Certainly we have a concern about ensuring the democratic rights of union

members and will look at some of the amendments in that regard. But I can't say for certain whether they'll fit into the timetable.

The members opposite believe that there will be an election called this fall, and I don't think then we would be able to pass this amendment. If members opposite believe there will be one next spring, I don't know if we'll get around to it. But it depends on the agenda and a large extent on what the Premier does in the next few months.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Minister, I would concur with you on that final statement. Mr. Chairman, I'm looking at the clock and am ready to just make a final wrap-up comment and proceed to vote on the estimates. If you're willing to stop the clock for a few minutes, we can conclude Human Resources, Labour and Employment estimates before adjourning this morning.

Mr. Minister, as we have reviewed the performance of your department this morning, it's left a number of questions unanswered, but more important that that, Mr. Minister, it's left those who depend on the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment to provide security and opportunity for the future to the people of Saskatchewan, feeling that things are a bit amiss.

I think as we've gone through these estimates this morning, Mr. Minister, there are a number of specific questions that I don't mind admitting that I've been disappointed with the answers. I didn't come to this Assembly expecting that you and I would agree on everything, but after all is said and done, it seems to me that the most significant characteristic of the performance of your department within the context of your government's framework, and yourself as a minister, Mr. Minister, are the way that it's dealt with the big pictures.

And the big picture, the big issues in Saskatchewan today are clearly employment, employment opportunities, and reversing that terrible out-flow of human resources that are going . . . that we're experiencing in the province of Saskatchewan today. It is absolutely a crisis that all of us in this Assembly must seriously address when the facts of the matter are that we've had a net loss of 50,000 people over the last four and a half years.

(1100)

And let me just put that into context again, Mr. Minister. Just run through the lists of . . . numbers of towns and cities that 50,000 people makes up. We have lost in the last four and a half years the equivalent of every man, woman, and child from the communities of Lloydminster, Melfort, Melville, Assiniboia, Biggar, Carrot River, Carlyle, Davidson, Esterhazy, Gull Lake, Herbert, Indian Head, Kamsack, Kerrobert, Kindersley, Leader, Lumsden, and Meadow Lake. Mr. Minister, that's a tragedy; it's a tragedy. And surely it is the responsibility of your department, given the mandate that you have to deal with migration of people to our province, and employment opportunities for those who live within our province, surely your department has one of the most onerous responsibilities to address the issues of the future for Saskatchewan people.

We will have our differences as we come to this Assembly, and that has always been the case; it will always be the case. And we'll have different views as to how those objectives should be reached. I simply want to, and I say this very sincerely, Mr. Minister, I want to wish your department every success, and the officials in your department and the employees of your department every success at addressing those two absolutely critical major issues that impact on the province of Saskatchewan today creating meaningful employment opportunities for our citizens of all age, and particularly our young people, because we're simply losing a great deal of energy and creativity and commitment to the very future of the province of Saskatchewan to build to make this province a better place for all of us to live. It's addressing that out-flow of population that is absolutely critical, and the key to that of course is addressing the economic issues of the day.

I don't share with you the view that we're on the right track. I hear clearly you say that you are. I suppose ultimately in a democracy, times will come when people will make their own decisions and so be it. However, in spite of our difference in philosophical approach to management of economy, despite our difference in the historical track records of the successes of both of our parties in providing leadership to the province of Saskatchewan in all sincerity, I do hope that your department is able to stem the tide, to reverse the out-flow of people, and to provide opportunities for meaningful employment creations in the future.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 10 inclusive agreed to.

Item 11

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chairman, just one question to the minister on item 11, payments to the property management corporation. Mr. Minister, I note that there's been an increase of \$77,500 from 1.4775 million to 1.555 million, an increase of some 5.2 per cent in the amount that your department is paying to the property management corporation. Mr. Minister, I would appreciate any brief explanation you could provide this House as to why that increase?

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Chairman, we leased additional space for a training conference room at the Circle 8 Building, and the balance of the increase of \$44,000 is for a rent increase over last year, which explains the total sum.

Item 11 agreed to.

Items 12 to 15 inclusive agreed to.

Items 16 and 17 — Statutory.

Item 18 agreed to.

Vote 20 agreed to.

Mr. Chairman: — I'd like to thank the minister and his officials.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chairman, I would simply like to thank the minister for his answers today and also to say thank you to the officials for their assistance in providing that information. And at the same time, Mr. Chairman, to wish the officials and the employees of that department every success in the year and years ahead in meeting some very important challenges that affect the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Chairman: — Being past 11 o'clock, the committee will rise and report progress.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly recessed until 1 p.m.