

April 4, 1990

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to today introduce to you, and through you to the other members of the House, Mr. Bill Routledge from the town of Unity. He is sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, alongside of my lovely wife. Mr. Routledge is in town today, Mr. Speaker, taking therapy for a wound in the last war.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you and all the rest to show our appreciation for people like Mr. Routledge, for their commitment and their sacrifice to help keep Canada free.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am speaking to you today as the minister of Public Service Commission. As the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you, and to all the members of the House, 30 public servants who are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

These civil servants are here today to participate in an in-depth tour of the Legislative Building and to get a firsthand glimpse of different aspects of the legislative process.

Mr. Speaker, these tours have been taking place since January and have been very successful. I have enjoyed being part of them. They are providing important insights to people who work in the various departments and are building a stronger team spirit between all of us who serve the people of Saskatchewan.

Today's visitors come from the Department of Health, Agriculture and Food, Education, Consumer Affairs, Economic Development and Tourism, Labour and Employment, the Public Service Commission, and the Clerk's office. I would like to thank them for their professionalism and for their enthusiasm for their work that has brought them here to learn more about the government.

Mr. Speaker, would you please join me and all the members of the House in welcoming them, the people of the public service.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like through you, sir, to introduce to all members of the House a group of grade 12 students from Riverview Collegiate in the constituency of Moose Jaw South.

Mr. Speaker, it's my real delight to welcome these grade 12 students from Riverview, given that only a few short years ago I graduated from that same high school. And I see, Mr. Speaker, that the tradition of RVC (Riverview

Collegiate Institute) in quality students continues. I would hope that all members today would join me in welcoming these grade 12 students from RVC in Moose Jaw.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to other members of the House, a group of 37 students from the constituency of Saskatoon Sutherland from the Roland Mitchener School. They're here to learn about the workings of the legislature and the democratic process. They're accompanied today by teachers Maurice Postnikoff and Jim Taylor, and chaperons Corinne Gogal and Greg Bubnick.

I'd like to ask all members of the House to greet them in the customary fashion.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add my words of welcome to those of my colleague, the member of the legislature for Saskatoon Sutherland, to the students and teachers and their chaperons from Roland Mitchener School, Mr. Speaker.

I had the pleasure of speaking to this class on environmental issues some three months ago, and they're a very enthusiastic and able group of students, Mr. Speaker. The question and answer period afterwards was excellent. And I am very delighted to see them coming to the legislature this afternoon, and I wish them a very pleasant time here and a safe trip home.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Study by Coopers & Lybrand

Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, for a long time now many people have questioned your accountability practices and the business practices you conduct within government, but I think it reached new highs yesterday in the Public Accounts Committee.

I was wondering if the Premier could explain why it is that \$2.7 million was paid for a study done by Coopers & Lybrand, paid by Crown investment corporation, when only 5 per cent of the study dealt with Crowns that came under the responsibility of Crown investment corporation. You think you could explain that to us, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — I'll take notice of the question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Anguish: — Well new question, Mr. Speaker. I would want to say that the Coopers & Lybrand study that I'm referring to dealt with advice to you and your government on the firing of dental technicians; how to stomp all over public employees; how to destroy the prescription drug

plan; how to give these employees 10 minutes to clean out their desk. And, Mr. Premier, I want to say that the president and chief executive officer, Mr. W.B. Gibson, who paid for the study, admitted he hadn't even read it and had not really any idea who had possession of the report at this time.

Is it not true that you acted in this fashion to move the study through Crown investments corporation to hide both the content of the report and the cost of the report, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — I'll take notice, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Anguish: — New question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. I would like to point out to you, Mr. Premier, that the study that I refer to was done under Mr. Gibson's signature, okay? And it was not done at the direction of the board of directors of Crown investments corporation. And he was given personal direction by the member from Souris-Cannington to sign the agreement with Coopers & Lybrand.

Is that the way that things work in your government? Is it if you want something done you send in one of your political heavyweights and order a public employee to sign a document that there's no apparent benefit to the particular department or agency and it's your political benefit? Is that how you used your political heavyweights to badger public employees, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I've taken notice twice already.

Mr. Anguish: — New question to the same minister, to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. I can see that you must have certainly learned something from Decima when they contacted you this morning, the way you treated the farmers yesterday. We expected you to have some answers for questions, though, at least this afternoon in the legislature, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Premier, this is an example of the blatant disregard that you have for the public purse, the blatant disregard you have for expenditures by your government. How can you justify the expenditure of \$2.7 million on a study where 95 per cent of it has nothing to do with Crown corporations? Will you in fact instruct the Crown investment board to release that report, to table that report tomorrow in the Public Accounts Committee at 8:30 tomorrow morning, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I've taken notice of the question for the fourth time.

Premier Cdn and Employees at Carrot River

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I have a question today for the minister in charge of privatization, whoever that may be. Mr. Minister, in 1987-88 you sold off, you gave away

the assets of Saskatchewan Minerals to out-of-province corporations — Kam-Kotia of Ontario and Premier Cdn of Quebec.

Mr. Minister, are you aware that today in Carrot River, Saskatchewan, Premier Cdn in the peat moss division is asking the employees there to take a 35 per cent wage roll-back? And further, Mr. Minister, are you aware that Premier Cdn is in fact threatening to pull up stakes and leave that community? Are you aware of that, Mr. Minister, and what are you prepared to do about it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Speaker, I am aware that we have had very successful new private companies in this province owned by citizens; that WESTBRIDGE Computer Corporation is the fastest growing computer corporation in Canada. I'm aware that the potash corporation is now running efficiently. I am aware that Saskoil is building a new head office in Regina and that people are employed building that head office. And I'm also aware that this minerals corporation has been run as an efficient company.

Now clearly, from time to time all markets will have an upswing and a downswing. I give a commitment to the member opposite to look further into his allegation, but I cannot accept his allegation as being fact. Even considering his background, I cannot consider it fact.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, supplementary to the same minister. Mr. Minister, obviously you are not aware of what is happening in Carrot River with Premier Cdn and the peat moss division. Mr. Minister, as a result of a fire last week, Premier Cdn is threatening to pull up stakes and leave Carrot River.

Mr. Minister, I have in front of me the agreement for sale made between yourselves and Premier Cdn, and I want to quote to you from this agreement. In this agreement Premier Cdn committed, and I quote:

... to modernize and ultimately to expand the production facilities comprised in the peat moss operations.

And further, Mr. Minister, Premier Cdn committed, and I quote again:

All reasonable efforts will be made to maintain levels of employment currently in effect.

Mr. Minister, are you prepared to take action against this Quebec company, Premier Cdn, if in fact this agreement is violated?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Speaker, possibly the member opposite is not aware that this corporation had a fire at their plant, and that could have something to do with the economic situation of this plant. As the Minister of . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The minister is answering the question as asked him. Members are interrupting him. It's difficult to answer when one is being interrupted. Give the man the opportunity to answer without interruption.

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well as I said, maybe the member opposite is not aware that there was a fire at this plant. And as Minister of Economic Diversification and Trade, we will do everything possible to assist this corporation in continuing their production in Saskatchewan and continuing hiring Saskatchewan people. And certainly we are not going to rush out with any lawsuits or any punishment because this corporation has had a fire. We will help them work their way through this, and I expect that this will be a healthy company in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, new question to the same minister. Mr. Minister, so that you are clear. Premier Cdn has laid people off. Premier Cdn is asking for a 35 per cent wage roll-back that has nothing to do with the fire. The fire has brought forward the threat of pulling out of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, my question to you is this. For 40 long years, Mr. Minister, this Saskatchewan Minerals corporation provided consistent and stable employment in good years and bad. This corporation provided profits to the people of Saskatchewan. You sold it off for a song. What is the result? Wage roll-backs, lay-offs, and now a threatened pull-out from the province. Mr. Minister, is this your idea of how privatization is to build the economy of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite doesn't understand either is that at Chaplin the employees now have profit sharing, something that the employees were never given when members opposite were the government that owned the plant and wouldn't allow the employees to share in their own productivity. That is a considerable change.

I believe that the member opposite should know better than to try to bring labour negotiations to the floor of this Assembly. There has been a fire at this plant. They're engaged in union negotiations. I'm also the Minister of Labour. If he doesn't know that, I can inform him of that. We will not have labour negotiations on the floor of this Assembly, but we will have them at the bargaining table.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Taxation at Local Government Level

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier, and, Mr. Premier, I want to quote from your budget speech where you say, and I quote:

We could have followed the Government of Canada's example and shifted our fiscal problem onto others.

Now it would appear to most people that by freezing the revenue-sharing grants and by making other cuts in funding to urban, rural, and northern municipalities that you are shifting your fiscal problems — in this case to the property tax payers. And you are doing the exact same thing that you criticize the federal government for doing.

Now given an inflation rate of 4.8 per cent, given a 5 per cent cut in funding to local governments, how do you propose that these local governments maintain the same level of services and hold the line on taxes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, our approach in the budget was, as I outlined a week ago, not to down load onto other levels of government, as the federal government had done. We chose not to down load onto school boards or hospital boards. And in fact, I think the evidence speaks for itself, an increase of 5.6 per cent for education and nearly 10 per cent for health care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Having said that, that doesn't mean to say that there weren't difficult decisions made, because some 21 departments had their funding either frozen or reduced.

Now certainly some will make the observation and the argument that cutting the \$300,000 grant to the Centennial Auditorium or putting the Regina rail relocation into review represents down-loading. I would argue that it does not. I think the number that municipalities particularly look to and looked to on budget night was the revenue-sharing grants. And I acknowledge that they were neither increased nor decreased, but in fact that very major grant was held the same as last year, Mr. Speaker, and that's because we don't believe in down-loading.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — This question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Mr. Minister, under the questionable leadership of the Premier, and with your connivance as a cabinet minister and now as a Minister of Finance, Saskatchewan has gone from a have province to a fiscal and economic basket case.

Governments in Saskatchewan, past governments, CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation), Liberal, NDP have brought in balanced budgets and surpluses year after year after year in the good times and in the bad times. You've given us deficit after deficit after deficit.

And my question is: given cuts in capital funding to municipalities, given those cuts and in transit grants, where do you get off by using your words "down loading" your problems, down loading your fiscal mismanagement on to local governments. How do you get off doing that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member overstates the case, I would argue, by using

words like “fiscal and economic basket case.” I don’t think the province is well served by that overstated rhetoric.

What was our approach in the budget? I just reiterate for the hon. member. Yes there were cuts, Mr. Speaker, we readily acknowledge that, because the approach was we would not raise taxes, Mr. Speaker. We would cut back . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — We would not raise taxes, Mr. Speaker, but rather we would look to make cuts in internal government spending, especially no new array particularly of new initiatives, rather cut back on spending, no new tax increases.

And yes, we do face the challenge of a deficit, Mr. Speaker. And why? Is it as the hon. member has described? Or if you look past the rhetoric, are not the reasons things like high interest rates, lingering droughts, international trade wars, Mr. Speaker, federal off-loading. By sort of every reasoned measure, I think those things are greatly impacting on our economy. We’re not happy that we’re having to receive equalization payments from the federal government, but that’s the reality of our economy, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Production Loans and Farm Foreclosures

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier or the Minister of Agriculture, and it relates to this . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Mr. Britton: — I appreciate the applause, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture, the Premier, and it relates to the government’s position on the production loan and on the moratorium on farm foreclosures, Mr. Speaker.

It is my understanding that the National Farmers Union, supported by the Leader of the Opposition, have advocated an indefinite moratorium on farm foreclosures, and that members of the opposition have openly advocated writing off any outstanding money owned under the production loan program, Mr. Speaker.

Could the Premier please explain the implications of such a moratorium?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Member from Regina Elphinstone and all other members come to order. Order. Member for Regina Victoria.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — The farmers told me yesterday that the Leader of the Opposition had promised them that they

would forgive the production loan and that would amount to about \$500 million. They also told me that the Leader of the Opposition would support a five-year moratorium, Mr. Speaker. They also said that outside the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The hon. members are interfering with a member’s right to speak, I believe. You’re interfering with a member’s right to speak. The interruptions, as anybody can see who is reasonable, are far too vocal and continuous, and you’re interfering with the man’s right to answer a question. I would like to ask you to allow him to answer.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When we’re dealing with the agricultural problem, it is very serious and it deserves the serious attention of this legislature. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we have passed a unanimous motion here in the House that we would request the federal government to help.

The hon. member asked me about the consequences of the position taken by the NFU (National Farmers Union) and the suggestion that we go into a five-year moratorium . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. It seems to me that what started this altercation in the House is that a government member asked the question. Well I’d like to remind hon. members, it is the tradition of any parliamentary system, including the one here in Saskatchewan, that government members have a right to ask a question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member from Wilkie has asked a question. The Premier has a right to answer.

Hon. Mr. Devine: — Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate that.

The response, Mr. Speaker, to the proposal that we have a five-year moratorium in the province of Saskatchewan, and indeed that the production loan is forgiven, Mr. Speaker, would have serious consequences to the people of Saskatchewan and to the credit union system. And if you would allow me, Mr. Speaker, I use this as an example. A credit union manager writing in to me, Mr. Speaker, about a moratorium, and I quote, and he says:

The credit union system would not be able to survive in rural Saskatchewan (with a moratorium) because their main dealings are with farmers. The credit unions are at present the only ones that are dealing with farmers really that require financial help and they would not be in a position to do so (with a moratorium, Mr. Speaker). Credit unions are locally owned . . .

Mr. Speaker, could I get the attention of the opposition, please.

. . . and borrow money to their members.

If we have to write (down) loans . . . against members deposits . . . we’ll have no other place to

draw funds, (Mr. Speaker).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sale of Cameco to Uranerz

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. And it relates to the \$160 million sale of Cameco to Uranerz, a West German company, just the other day.

Mr. Premier, will your government table in this House immediately after question period the last evaluation done on the assets relating to this sale? And will you also confirm, Mr. Premier, that the money will be split between the federal and provincial governments, and that indeed the money will be furthermore used just to sweeten the pot for further privatization?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Speaker, Cameco is a private company owned by the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan at present, and they operate as an ordinary company in this province, as do all the other companies. If this company is chosen to sell some of their assets to pay down some of their debt, then that is a business decision they have made, and we are not going to second-guess them here in the legislature as to how they should do business on behalf of that company.

And so Cameco is also, I understand . . . or some of the uranium companies have been buying uranium to try to stabilize the market. These are ordinary business decisions, and we are not going to interfere here. And I don't think the member opposite, the member for Cumberland, can say that he knows more about how to run a company than the people in charge of that company. And we respect their ability and we will stick with their ability to manage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Another question to the minister responsible. The question relates to the fact that along with the \$7 million royalty tax holidays, last year you laid off 100 workers at Cameco, an action which had severe consequences for the northern economy. Will you confirm today that the reason behind the lay-off was to make Cameco a better prospect for sell-off this past week?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should talk to the Leader of the Opposition. It's his party who wants to stop mining uranium in Saskatchewan, and here we are . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Here we are doing our best to try to keep this industry going when the price of uranium has fallen from over \$50 to \$8 on a spot market. That is

putting that company and our uranium industry in a spot. And to heap more trouble on this industry, the members opposite say we should stop mining uranium entirely. What would they expect our citizens to do in northern Saskatchewan? So the question is totally out of order. He should go to his caucus and ask his colleagues why they want to shut down all the mines.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, another question. Mr. Minister, is this . . .

An Hon. Member: — Is this a supplementary or a new question?

Mr. Goulet: — This is a new question. Mr. Minister, in regards to the \$4.4 billion deficit that this government has given the people of Saskatchewan and the fact that you operate under crisis management on a daily basis, is this another just straightforward, piecemeal attempt in dealing with this issue of high unemployment? Which I might add, Mr. Minister, they might as well shut down the mine with your unemployment situation in northern Saskatchewan and the way that you've operated in the past eight years. What good, Mr. Minister, are your assurances about foreign ownership restrictions, environmental protection, and provincial control that you stated very clearly in the past?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Well, Mr. Speaker, in all of that tirade it's hard to ascertain exactly what the question was. But I will try my best to interpret what his question is.

My understanding is that he has concern with respect to the Canadian ownership provisions, and he has concern with respect to environmental protection. And I say to the member opposite that these are laws in this province and in this country. And if he will read the laws, he will see that they are relatively sound laws, and there is a commitment from this government and the federal government of Canada to continue strengthening the environmental laws.

So his question was so broad, it's difficult to pin-point exactly what the question was. But I can assure him that our laws will be followed and that the Canadian ownership laws, as they were in the Air Canada situation and in the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, that those laws on ownership will be followed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I want to rise on a point of order. It has to do with question period today where the member from Wilkie, I believe, clearly broke the rules of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to rise on a point of order today. Clearly, in question period it's our opinion

that the member from Wilkie broke the rules of the Assembly by asking questions of the Premier to outline for him the policy of the National Farmers Union of Saskatchewan, and also alleged policy of the New Democratic Party, which he really got messed up. And I can understand now why the farmers of the province are confused.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: — I want to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to look at *Beauchesne's* on rule . . . or the chapter 409, section (6), which clearly outlines, and I quote:

A question must be within the administrative competence of the Government.

And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, for a number of reasons, this question was not in order, and I'd like you to check the verbatim from today's question period and make a ruling on this matter and bring it back to us. Because we feel very strongly that the member from Wilkie was not within the rules of the Assembly, nor was the Premier when he attempted again today to mislead the farmers of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In speaking to this point of order, I would like to reference page 21 of our **Rules and Procedures**, paragraph 35, subsection (1). And it states, Mr. Speaker, that:

. . . oral questions may be asked seeking information from Ministers of the Crown relating to public affairs, and to other Members relating to any bill, motion or other public matter connected with the business of the Assembly in which such Members may be concerned . . .

Now, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP, Mr. Speaker, are taking the position, if the NDP, Mr. Speaker, are taking the position that a rural member representing thousands of farm families in these difficult times does not have the right to ask a question of the Minister of Agriculture, the Premier of this province, respecting farm foreclosures and moratoriums and/or the potential write-off of hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer's dollars, Mr. Speaker, then there is something wrong with these rules. I suggest the member has every right and also, Mr. Speaker, not only every right, Mr. Speaker, but every obligation to ask such questions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Mr. Shillington: — I'm sure it's unnecessary to point out to you, but it seems to be necessary to point out to the Government House Leader that the section you read from does not in fact deal with the oral question period.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I don't profess to be an expert on the rules, Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you. Thank you. I do happen to represent . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Mr. Britton: — Mr. Speaker, I do happen to represent a rural constituency. The question that I put to the Premier was brought to my attention yesterday, and I had thought it was quite relevant for me to find out the answers to that question.

The Speaker: — Well, hon. members, I believe that he's trying to speak to the point of order and he has that right to do, but we're having great, great difficulty hearing him. Quite frankly, I don't know if he is speaking to it or not because I can't hear him. Hon. members are not allowing me to hear him. So let's give him the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Britton: — Mr. Speaker, it's a little confusing to me that the opposition won't allow a question on the farm question. To me . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Thank you very much for your attention. Mr. Speaker, when we are in a crisis — by their own admission they say we're in a crisis — I brought a question to the Premier to do with agriculture. Now as I said, Mr. Speaker, if I was not . . . if it was not in order for me to ask that question, somebody should have been asking that question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. From what I was able to hear of the question — and of course I will have to review the verbatim to confirm it — but from what I was able to hear of the question, it was a question relating to policies of the NFU as it affected our province, and if that in fact is what I heard, then I believe the question under those circumstances is in order, because it would be under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Agriculture. However, I will review the verbatim, certainly to see exactly what was said, and be pleased to bring back a more official look.

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, prior to orders of the day, I would seek leave of the Assembly to move a motion respecting some change in hours as discussed with the House Leader on the Easter weekend.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Change in Assembly Hours for Easter Weekend

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move, seconded by the Deputy House Leader, that is the member for Rosthern:

That notwithstanding rule 3 of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan* this Assembly shall on Thursday, April 12, 1990, meet at 10 o'clock a.m. until 1 o'clock p.m., and that when this Assembly adjourns on Thursday, April 12, 1990, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 17, 1990.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hepworth that the Assembly resolve itself into the Committee of Finance.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I began my remarks on this budget debate last night before 10 o'clock and would like to conclude them this afternoon.

I began those remarks by suggesting and arguing in this debate that the budget that was presented to us by the Minister of Finance only deepens the crisis of credibility; that this government, I maintain, has lost its credibility, lost the confidence of the people of Saskatchewan.

And it would strike me, Mr. Speaker, that the performance that we saw in question period this afternoon will again only deepen that crisis of credibility. Anyone who may have watched what happened in this House this afternoon will know, not only has this government lost the ability to govern the affairs of the province, it can't even govern its own members.

What we have here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, was a very, very peculiar situation. We have a member of the government, who I assume is part of the government caucus, who I assume attends government caucus meetings, who I assume has some access to the Premier — if not the Premier's office, at least in caucus meetings, a member of the government get up in his House and ask the Premier of the province about the policy of the Christian Farm (Crisis) Action Committee and the policy of the National Farmers Union. Now if that member was interested in that policy, he might have taken the opportunity yesterday to meet those groups who were right here in the building. He did not need to come into this House today and put a question to his Premier.

What I found, Mr. Speaker, very interesting, and I guess where the question of credibility really arises, is that I note the member opposite, to ask his question of the Premier, gets up and reads, reads the question from a sheet of paper. Immediately the Premier of this province stands up with another sheet of paper on which is the answer to the question.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in my view this makes a charade of what is a very essential part of the functioning of this legislature and the functioning of the democratic process in this province, and that is the oral question period when, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, members of the opposition have an opportunity to question ministers of the Crown and those responsible for governing.

And so, Mr. Speaker, when I say there is a crisis of credibility in this province, it was confirmed by the budget; it was confirmed again today in this House.

Mr. Speaker, last night in my remarks I tried to bring some general comments to the budget. I tried to identify some of those issues that are important to the community I represent. I lifted up the concern again of the investors who have lost life savings in Principal Trust, a concern that they are not identified in this budget.

And today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move to a conclusion in my remarks by discussing that cut-back in this budget, that of all of the many cut-backs to people in this budget, I think this one is the one that troubles me the most, that causes me only what I can describe as sadness, Mr. Speaker. I want to say a word now about the cut in this budget to the matching grants program.

(1445)

Mr. Speaker, as you will know and other members will know, it is through the matching grants program that the Government of Saskatchewan is able to reach out in a very small way, but in a tangible, real way. It is the means by which the Government of Saskatchewan is able to reach out and help the very poorest of the poor on this globe, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes I sincerely do wonder how members opposite can sleep at night when they know what they are doing and what they have done in this budget in terms of the matching grants program to the poorest of the poor of this world.

Mr. Speaker, just by way of background for members present, there are in excess of 30 organizations in this province, who, as part of their commitment and their mandate, reach out to the world, reach out to the hurting peoples of this world to extend the compassion and the generosity of Saskatchewan people. There are well into 30 organizations in this province, Mr. Speaker, and they have banded together in an effort to co-ordinate the kind of aid and assistance, emergency and in long-term development that leaves this province for the Third World. They have banded together in a group that's entitled, that calls itself, The Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to just point out a number of the groups that are involved in the Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation. They include, for instance, The Baptist Union of Western Canada. SCIC (Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation) includes the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. They include the Canadian Crossroads International, the Canadian Lutheran World Relief, CUSO, Disciples of Christ Church, the Foster Parents Plan (of Canada), the Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), The Salvation Army, Save the Children, the United Church of Canada, and the list goes on, the YWCA. More than 30, Mr. Speaker, groups, helping agencies in this province band together in the Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation to ensure that the generosity of Saskatchewan people reaches the Third World, reaches those who deserve and need it most.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this government opposite likes, and very often talks about, partnership, partnership with people. Well 20 years ago, 20 years ago or thereabouts, Mr. Speaker, under a New Democratic regime, a partnership was established between the Government of Saskatchewan and these volunteer organizations within our province to reach out to the poorest of the poor in our world.

The program at that time was started, it was entitled the matching grants program, and its goal, Mr. Speaker, was that the Government of Saskatchewan would match, dollar for dollar, those funds raised by volunteers in our province for work in the Third World and in international aid.

Mr. Speaker, we never met that goal, we never achieved the goal of matching from the treasury, on a dollar-per-dollar basis, the dollars raised by the volunteer community. In fact, I think the closest we came was in 1975-76 when the match was about 80 per cent — an 80 per cent grant from the government for the 100 per cent raised by the volunteer associations.

Mr. Speaker, they came to office in 1982, this group of men and women, and at that time the volunteer organizations in our province were raising in the neighbourhood of \$3.6 million — all volunteer dollars.

The government of Saskatchewan, in 1982, budgeted \$2.1 million to support the work of these provincial organizations in that partnership between government and these organizations, these helping organizations. A year later, after they were elected, this government slashed that budget by 50 per cent; cut that 2.1 to \$1 million even as the volunteer donations were on the rise across this province.

Then we come to post-1986 and this government opposite cuts the budget again to \$800,000. Meanwhile the volunteer gifts to these organizations, to CUSO, the Young Women's Christian Association, to the Foster Parents Plan (of Canada), to the Catholic development agencies, these donations are growing. This partner is pulling funding.

Last year, Mr. Speaker — and I complimented the government on it at that time — they added \$50,000 to that budget in terms of an emergency relief provision. So last year, Mr. Speaker, the government opposite contributed \$850,000. But you will want to recognize, Mr. Speaker, that last year the volunteer agencies in this province raised over \$6 million. People volunteering their time and effort raised \$6 million.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. We've had tough times in our province; we've had tough times in our province, but those times have not defeated the compassion of Saskatchewan people. For in these tough times, Saskatchewan people have reached out in greater and greater ways, in greater and greater amounts to support the poorest of the poor in our world: last year \$6.1 million raised in volunteer dollars from this province to go to the third world for education, for food, for development.

This government, in this budget Mr. Speaker, in what I

think is the most tragic feature of this budget, cut the funding to SCIC, cut the partnership, cut the matching grant from \$850,000 to \$425,000. They cut it in half again. Mr. Speaker, sometimes I wonder if there is any conscience left here, if there is any compassion left.

Mr. Speaker, they save, by this cutting measure, \$425,000 as a percentage of the total provincial budget, Mr. Speaker. That amounts to one-tenth of one per cent of the total budget of Saskatchewan. One-tenth of one per cent.

Mr. Speaker, where are the priorities here? Where are the priorities with this government? They take two of their front bench cabinet ministers who want to get out; they put one in Hong Kong and they put one in Minneapolis, and between the two of those individuals they are taking more from the treasury of Saskatchewan than the money being saved in the cut to SCIC. For two men there is \$400,000-plus; for SCIC, for 30 volunteer organizations in this province, there's a \$400,000 cut.

Mr. Speaker, we will . . . You may have seen some of the press coverage of this issue, and you will know that those people involved in these 30 organizations know what the consequence will be. Mr. Speaker, I would like to, just for the record, indicate to you in a very succinct way what this grant has meant for people in this world.

And I quote from the brief presented to government members opposite by SCIC, a brief that, I might add, documents every project undertaken by the volunteer organizations using public money, a brief that clearly demonstrates that every thin dime that leaves this province in aid is going to help those who need it most, in the most effective way, through the volunteer organizations who are on the ground in the Third World. In their report they say this:

With the support of the Government of Saskatchewan, SCIC member agencies were able to assist hundreds of thousands of people in the Third World in their effort to achieve a better quality of life. A total of \$787,000 in matching grants was disbursed to 98 projects in 42 countries. Approximately 60 per cent of the funding went to food, agriculture, and rural development; the balance of the funding went to a variety of projects in health care, education, community development, and other sectors.

On behalf of our Third World partners, the poorest of the poor, SCIC and its member agencies thank the Government of Saskatchewan for its support in these projects.

For the same amount of money as we are now giving to two individuals to put them in Hong Kong and Minneapolis, these agencies through SCIC were able to help literally hundreds of thousands of people. Mr. Speaker, I wonder sometimes how members opposite can sleep at night.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people have demonstrated, over and over again, they are a compassionate people, they are a caring people, and even in hard times they are

willing to reach out and help the least fortunate in this world.

Now I recognize that some members opposite will be saying, well charity must begin at home. Mr. Speaker, we are at home on this globe. This world is our home, and yes, charity begins at home. And whether it be a child who is hungry in downtown Regina, or whether it be a child who starves in the Horn of Africa, that child is our neighbour. This world is our home.

The development agencies, the churches, the volunteer groups, CUSO, Foster Parents, Cansave, and so on, are not asking for vast amounts of revenue from the provincial government, they're asking for a small partnership. This group of men and women have decided to sever that partnership in a very significant way, Mr. Speaker. And that, in my view, is tragic.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude my portion of the remarks in the debate. I know others are anxious to enter into this debate.

I just want to say again, as I said at the beginning, the budget that we have, a cut to international aid and the poorest of the poor, the cuts that we're going to see in education, the funding freezes to urban governments, the lack of support to the Saskatchewan farm family, is a consequence, not of one year of mismanagement, it is the consequence of eight years of Tory mismanagement in this province. Eight years that has put us \$4.36 billion in debt. Eight years of mismanagement that now costs us \$1.350 million every day of the year in interest charges alone. That's why we're in the mess we're in, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The people of this province, across this province, are saying it's time for a new government who will bring a change to the fiscal direction of this province that will show us a way out of this financial morass. And, Mr. Speaker, I can say to you and to all members of this House, the member from Riversdale and the New Democratic Party caucus is ready to undertake that challenge when the Premier is ready to call an election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the budget of this government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a great honour and a privilege for me to stand in my place and take part in this historic debate here today. But before I do, Mr. Speaker, before I get into the main part of my address, I would like to congratulate you, sir, on accepting the job as Speaker again. I appreciate that.

I would also like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to say how proud I feel to be here representing the good people of Wilkie, a job which I take quite sincerely, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I say historic because this budget that my hon. friend, the Minister of Finance, has announced is one of the finest budgets I have seen from any government. This budget responds to the good, efficient management of our resources by restraining government spending. But at the same time, this budget provides Saskatchewan people with a higher level of protection and service in health and education and agriculture than they have experienced before — ever, Mr. Speaker — and this has been accomplished without one single tax increase, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's an accomplishment, and I am proud to have played a role in delivering this budget to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this province rightfully expect responsible management of our resources, and at the same time demands for health, education, and agricultural programs continue to rise.

But we can't simply write a blank cheque to be paid for by future generations, and it's simply not practical or right, Mr. Speaker, to keep on raising taxes. So instead, we have introduced a number of cost-cutting measures: things like rolling back cabinet salaries; freezing government growth and spending; in fact cutting budgets in eight departments — cutting budgets in eight departments, Mr. Speaker, by 10 per cent; ending the home program; eliminating the gas tax rebate, and others. And there are many others, but the Minister of Finance has already described them in detail.

(1500)

I want to stress that these measures will save the people of the province \$300 million in the next two years. That is good management, Mr. Speaker, and it is management which allows us to respond to the pressing needs in other areas.

Needs in health care, for example. Once again this budget shows our government's tremendous commitment to health care. We are increasing health care spending by \$136 million, Mr. Speaker, bringing the total health care budget to \$1.5 billion — 1.5 billion, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan's health care is second to none, and this budget proves that our government is determined to keep it that way.

This budget reaffirms our commitment to education as well. If we want to compete and grow and prosper as a province, we must give our people a superior education. Mr. Speaker, this budget does that. And we have done that throughout the last decade. And we have continued to do it this year by allocating \$888 million to education, Mr. Speaker. We will now be spending \$2,600 for every single elementary and secondary student in the province and \$8,500 for every university student.

The education budget, Mr. Speaker, accounts for 20 per cent of the total budget. That is a level of commitment and funding the likes of which this province has never seen before. And I believe it's worth every penny, Mr. Speaker, because our greatest resource is our people. Now I could stop there because what I have said so far, Mr. Speaker, is impressive enough. It could stand on its own.

After a decade filled with drought and low grain prices, low uranium and potash prices, we have managed to provide more funding for education and health care than ever before. And I have barely got started, Mr. Speaker. Because in this budget the Government of Saskatchewan has put the provincial treasury on the line in full support of Saskatchewan farm families. We must stand behind our farm families, Mr. Speaker, because even though we managed to expand our manufacturing sector by over 600 per cent, and even though we are producing paper, gasoline, turbines, and tractors, agriculture is still what makes this province's economy work.

So we have honoured our commitment to agriculture with \$400 million in spending and \$525 million in a spring program for spring seeding, Mr. Speaker. That is the sort of commitment and support that Saskatchewan farmers must have to fight the subsidy wars and droughts, and this government has provided it.

Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes the importance of a stable farm economy for the entire province's well-being, and we have responded by supporting agriculture better than any government in Saskatchewan's history.

There are many other good things to talk about in this budget, Mr. Speaker, like Consensus Saskatchewan, which will give Saskatchewan people more input into government than any other citizens in the country and possibly the world, Mr. Speaker. And the community development bonds, which I think are going to transform almost every community in Saskatchewan. But I know my hon. colleagues will have much more to say about these and other items in the budget.

So right now, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to do something a little bit out of the ordinary, but something I think it is important for the people and yourself to hear, Mr. Speaker. In past sessions I have asked the hon. members opposite if they would put forward their budget based on their promises and party policies so that Saskatchewan people could have a look at the alternative fiscal plan for the province. Unfortunately they have never done this, which has bothered me a little bit, Mr. Speaker, because the NDP say that they want to form government some time. Heaven forbid. Heaven forbid, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very interested to know what sort of a budget they would present. What's more, I'm wondering if there are any good, solid ideas these hon. members would have in respect to budgeting, ideas that this government maybe could use, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, with all that in mind, I've set out to put together the NDP budget based on their promises and claims against this government's spending and on some of their party resolutions. Without their co-operation, Mr. Speaker, of course it's difficult to be completely accurate, but I have been as precise and as fair as I can possibly be. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think you will see at the end of my remarks that I have been more than fair.

I will be tabling documents supporting my remarks after I am done. And I invite the members opposite, I invite the media, to look through my numbers, and if they can find something wrong in those numbers, Mr. Speaker, I would

be pleased to have them show me where I am wrong. Because, Mr. Speaker, I have not had access to details of this year's budget until last Thursday, so the figures I'm using in this budget for the NDP, Mr. Speaker, are from the 1989-90 budget.

The first commitment which came to mind was the Leader of the Opposition's promise to eliminate what he says is a \$12 billion deficit in 15 years. Well, Mr. Speaker, this promise was reported in a March 8 *Star-Phoenix* article, and of course the hon. member has repeated it many times. The easy answer for costing this out is to simply divide \$12 billion by 15 years. Well that doesn't account for the interest charges along the way, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not an accountant and I don't have a fancy calculator that factors interest in as we go along. So I phoned a friend of mine who has one of those, and assuming the real interest rate at 5 per cent, the opposition would have to make a payment of almost \$1.2 billion a year for 15 years to keep this particular promise. Well that's a pretty hefty payment for the provincial treasury — \$1.2 billion a year for 15 years. Okay.

The next thing, Mr. Speaker, that came to mind was the promise by both the Leader of the Opposition and the member from Saskatoon University to eliminate poverty. Now this is a pretty tough one to tackle since there are many ways to define poverty.

But what I did was using Statistics Canada on Saskatchewan figures in 1988, Mr. Speaker, and the low income cut-off lines defined by StatsCanada for the populations of 30,000 to 999,999 — now that range is one that I've noticed the member from Saskatoon University is continuously using, so I think that's fair to use his figures, Mr. Speaker — I used the categories: unattached individuals, and one, two, three, four, and five-member families. Now from there it was simply a matter of finding the various income levels below the cut-off line, calculating what the government payment would be required to each individual family to make up the income shortfall, and multiplying that by the number of families in each income level, and then adding the totals from each family category.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of figures but it's all here and the members are welcome to look at it. All my figures are included. All my figures are included in the documents that I will be tabling, Mr. Speaker. And after accounting for a raise in the consumer price index of 5.3 in 1989, I came up with a total of \$481 million per year that the opposition would have to pay out to bring Saskatchewan low income earners up to the poverty line. And again, the calculation and statistics will all be tabled for the media, for the members opposite to view. And I hope, Mr. Speaker, that they let me know if I am wrong. I stand by those figures.

Next, Mr. Speaker, I turn to health care to see what the opposition would do there. Well I knew that the NDP has often said they would bring back the old dental plan. And in fact I seem to remember the member from Regina Lakeview, just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, talking about just that very thing in the House.

I asked the Department of Health to find a cost for this,

and they informed me that the old program would cost at least an additional \$16.4 million the first year. Mr. Speaker, the same member — the same member, Mr. Speaker — has also promised to bring back the old prescription drug plan. That would cost an additional \$70.6 million a year.

The member opposite has also claimed that our health care system is in a crisis and has continually called for more funding. And I just want to read you a quote, Mr. Speaker, from the last session, on page 4267 of *Hansard* where the member says, and I quote:

... we (still) have a health care system that's in crisis. And regardless of what the minister says about his 11 per cent increase, the fact of the matter is that hardly makes up for the (shortfall) ...

Now I'll admit I was trying to read minds there a little bit, Mr. Speaker. But I noticed that if the NDP were not satisfied with 11 per cent increase, then it was a pretty safe bet that they would increase the health care budget at least to 12 per cent — one decimal. And to do that, Mr. Speaker, would require an additional \$165 million.

Then I turned to education, and the first thing I found was an 1989 NDP Policy Commission Reports stating that the kindergarten to grade 12 student-teacher ratio — and I quote — "... must be a priority for funding ..." Okay? Obviously they plan to reduce that ratio which now stands at 16.5, Mr. Speaker, 16.5. Again it was impossible to read minds, but I think all of us can agree that reducing that ratio to 16.0 is a very possible option and the NDP will follow that ... will follow. And that additional cost, Mr. Speaker, is \$14 million a year for 0.5 — very reasonable I believe. And I'm trying to be very conservative here.

And I want both the opposition and the media to note how reasonable I am trying to be. When I assessed these budgetary commitments, Mr. Speaker, I did not go to the extreme and say, they must want to decrease the ratio to 1:1 or any nonsense like that. Rather I took the nearest possible ratio.

Likewise in the health budget, Mr. Speaker, I did not say that they promised to increase it by 40 per cent, although considering the arguments members make, and about real increases over and above inflation, I could reasonably have done so. Rather I used the closest incremental of only 1 per cent. So I am trying very hard to be reasonable and fair, Mr. Speaker.

To continue then with the NDP budget. In my search on pages 564 and 872 of last session's *Hansard*, I found that both the member from Saskatoon South and the member from Saskatoon Nutana claimed that universities require a 5.3 per cent raise in operating grants. That's in addition, Mr. Speaker, to the 2 per cent we had already given them. That would require an additional \$7.9 million, Mr. Speaker.

Now I've also found a very curious entry in the NDP's 1989 Policy Commission Reports, where on page 21 they state that, and I quote:

The people of Saskatchewan support a full, public funded ... educational system ...

Well I found that a little puzzling because the only thing not publicly funded now are private vocational schools and post-secondary tuition. And since we have not heard the Leader of the Opposition promise to pay tuition fees since the early 1970s, I thought they had given that idea up long ago.

Not so, Mr. Speaker. Here we have the NDP again calling for public to pay post-secondary tuition, which adds another \$31.5 million for university fees and \$3.8 million for SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) fees to our total, Mr. Speaker. Notice, Mr. Speaker, that I did not include the millions of dollars it would take to fully fund all the private vocational schools in the province. I am trying to be as fair as I can, Mr. Speaker, and as conservative as I can with this budget.

Now on page 4373 of last session's *Hansard*, the member from Saskatoon University promised to implement a school lunch program. And in the NDP caucus news release accompanying that report on hunger and poverty, the NDP advocated a breakfast and lunch program, not only for schools but for day care as well.

And I want the members opposite to note that once again I am being as conservative as possible with these numbers, and ignored the costs of day care breakfast and lunches, Mr. Speaker. And I had a little trouble calculating the cost just for schools alone. The problem is deciding how many children will we feed. Well where do we draw the line between hunger ... between a hungry child and one who isn't? And what grade do we stop, Mr. Speaker? Well I settled on the cost for a universal program, which is I think what the member from Saskatoon University has argued for in the past, and that would cost \$67.6 million a year, Mr. Speaker.

(1515)

Now finally, Mr. Speaker, I noted that in this year's budget we have increased education funding by some \$47 million. And since the opposition continuously claims that education is underfunded, I think it is reasonable to expect that they would increase the education budget by at least that much. I think they would go as far as we did, Mr. Speaker, 47 million.

And incidentally, we have also increased our agricultural spending by 253 million. And based on the opposition's repeated calls for more funding in this area, I thought it reasonable to add the same amount to their agricultural budget, Mr. Speaker, their agricultural spending. And after the performance in question period, I'm wondering if they're even interested in agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

In other words, in these two areas I only assumed that the NDP would do at least as much as our government.

Moving on, I found a call for — and I quote — "the creation of an environmental industry by establishing an Institute of the Environment" in the 1989 NDP Policy Commission Reports. The cost estimates for such an

institute range from 20 million to 100 million, Mr. Speaker, so I split the difference and I settled on a figure of \$60 million.

Moving to Social Services, I found numbers calling for increased assistance rates, but this NDP budget addresses many of those by eliminating poverty. However, Mr. Speaker, on page 4485 of last session's *Hansard*, I noticed that the member for Saskatoon University called on the government to subsidize day care for middle income earners, and I found, Mr. Speaker, that that would require an additional \$7.6 million a year.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I could not help but remember that the member from Regina Rosemont stated in a 1988 interview that if elected the NDP government would de-commission the Rafferty-Alameda dam project. Now judging from their joy at the project being halted, I don't think their plans have changed. The costs involved here are very hard to estimate since no accurate figures detailing how much has been spent are readily available. As well, it is impossible to predict the cost of the lawsuits that would undoubtedly follow such an action.

However, to be as fair as possible, Mr. Speaker, I kept my estimate very low and arrived at a figure of about \$20 million. Now this figure assumes that at least \$10 million of the project has been completed. The cost of tearing down and hauling away the concrete and re-landscaping the area would easily equal double the original cost. Since lawsuits have not been included at all, I think the members opposite would have to agree with me that \$20 million total is more than reasonable, much more than reasonable.

Mr. Speaker, if you add up all the program spending I have talked about, you end up with a total of \$2.4 billion — 2.4. Now not bad, except when you add it to the existing \$4.47 billion of government spending, and that was only at the 1989-90 level, we get a total NDP budget of \$6.87 billion, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — How much was that?

Mr. Britton: — \$6.8 billion, Mr. Speaker.

And now, Mr. Speaker, just so it is understood how reasonable I am being in preparing this budget for the NDP, be clear that I have not included their vague commitments to higher salaries for teachers, nurses, doctors, public servants, and almost all other groups who are involved in labour negotiations at any one given time.

I have also not included increased cost from promises to provide increased funding to non-government organizations such as Planned Parenthood and the Status of Women and the various other advocacy groups, nor for the service organizations who have been promised more money, including every one from woman shelters to humane societies. I left that out, Mr. Speaker. I'm trying to be fair, and I think I have been.

Nor, Mr. Speaker, have I included the many big-time commitments contained in the large number of resolutions passed at NDP conventions, which the Leader of the Opposition has repeatedly stated that he is bound

by them. He is bound by the resolutions.

So while he is bound by those resolutions and bound by many, many promises, I wanted to be extremely reasonable and present only a bare bones budget for the members opposite. And yet this bare bones budget is a budget of almost \$6.9 million which, using last year's revenue figures of 4.083 billion, will give the NDP budget a deficit of \$2.82 billion, Mr. Speaker — a deficit of over \$2.8 billion, Mr. Speaker.

And again, this budget I have calculated here today doesn't even include all the commitments and programs the opposition have promised. I haven't used them all. This from a party whose leader has promised to balance the budget. And, Mr. Speaker, he has balanced the budget and eliminate \$12 billion in debt. Obviously the member opposite will have to cut programs.

So if we continue this exercise, let's suppose that the opposition do as good a job as we have in this year's budget and manage to save \$300 million over two years by restricting government spending. I realize that the hon. members opposite have opposed those cuts, but I want to be as fair as possible with this budget, so I'm going to give them a bit of a freebie here, Mr. Speaker. Subtracting 150 million from their budget will give us a new total of \$6.75 billion. That's their budget. Still an enormous budget, Mr. Speaker. The opposition clearly must cut more programs.

Well when we're looking for indications of what the opposition might eliminate, I ran across the following quote from the opposition leader, and I quote:

We have nine economic development departments under the PCs. It's just been reduced to four. Four. That's ridiculous. I mean, we can reduce that to one and it should be.

And that was Cable Regina, *Nightviews*, March 20, 1990 — very recent, Mr. Speaker. So I have to accept the leader at his word. I'm not at all sure what the Leader of the Opposition meant, but we'll accept him at his word.

This government has already consolidated the departments of economic development and tourism, science and technology, public participation, trade and investment — all into one department.

Now I cannot believe that the opposition would be so foolish as to eliminate the departments of Rural Development, Consumer and Commercial Affairs, and Energy and Mines. But once again, I have no way of reading their minds, Mr. Speaker.

So to be generous, I cut four large departments. I decided to cut the entire 1990 budgets for Economic Development and Tourism, economic diversification, and the investment fund; the Department of Public Participation; the Department of Trade and Investment. These cuts would total \$71.3 million and bring the NDP budget down to \$6.68 billion. But these cuts would also put many, many people out of work and still leave a massive deficit, Mr. Speaker.

Now and once again, just stress the fact that I'm being

generous, because I do not think these departments the Leader of the Opposition wanted to get rid of, since three of them are the ones that were already consolidated. But it would seem too Draconian to eliminate the departments of Rural Development, Consumer and Commercial Affairs, and Energy and Mines.

But I think we have to wait to hear from the horse's mouth, Mr. Speaker. And again, I do invite the Leader of the Opposition to be precise in exactly which four government departments he plans to eliminate.

It is important to know how much money it would save, how many people it would put out of work, and what essential services he would deny to the people of the province. And I think rural Saskatchewan would be very interested to know if he thinks their Department of Rural Development should be destroyed. Be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, I have tried to be generous, and since the hon. members opposite have already cut \$223.2 million in one year, I cannot see many more cuts are possible, but he has identified a couple and we should put them forward for what they're worth.

The member from Riversdale said he would save \$48 million by cancelling advertising. I find that very interesting, and we will, for this exercise, simply accept his number, since it is his budget. But I also think it is important to recognize the impact of this decision — no more advertising for government tenders. That kind of contradicts the call for more open government, Mr. Speaker, and more open tendering.

No more advertising for Crown corporations, and guess what I think about that, Mr. Speaker. Imagine if the current government told SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) that it could no longer advertise and it started losing business to its private sector competitors, imagine what the Leader of the Opposition would say then. He would say the government is trying to privatize SGI by attrition.

But he has promised to eliminate advertising. That means senior citizens will no longer be informed about when it's time to apply for their heritage grants. And I suppose that might mean there would be even a little more money saved for the NDP budget. But just how much money is unpredictable, so we just can't budget for that, Mr. Speaker.

It would mean the children's reading campaign would be cancelled, the Lights On For Life campaign would be cancelled, and Everyone Wins campaign would be cancelled. And these advertising campaigns, Mr. Speaker, were not created at the whim of the government, but at the earnest request and active participation of organizations such as Saskatchewan Safety Council, the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, and some 20 health organizations, and on and on.

But the opposition says it can get 48 million by attacking these groups, and it is their budget so we must account for their promises. The \$48 million in cuts bring the NDP budget down to \$6.63 billion, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, the Leader of the Opposition has said he would

reduce the number of cabinet ministers. And I'd just like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the member for Riversdale does not have to wait for government to do something on salaries and benefits. This government has already cut back the salaries of its members and the opposition has remained silent, opting instead to keep their salary increases when they have the option to reduce them.

And the government has already passed regulations to prevent members on the government side from taking severance and going to other government jobs. But the opposition has kept this possibility for themselves, so there is no need to wait if he is really sincere.

But let's take him at his word and let's totally eliminate salaries for cabinet and legislative secretaries, Mr. Speaker. It would amount to a savings of about \$818,000 a year, which still leaves the NDP budget with a deficit of over \$2.5 billion. Now obviously the only option left is taxation and very heavy taxation at that.

The following quote from the Hon. Leader of the Opposition clearly shows that increased taxation is part of his plan for government. And I quote:

. . . (If) you want to take a look at whether or not there are any sources of taxation in the large resource area . . .

That is Cable Regina *Nightviews*, March 20, 1990. They will look at resources of taxation resource area. They will look at the sources for taxation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I can predict what the opposition response to the budget I have described here will be. And if they gain power, I know the first place they will look for more revenue — from the oil industry in this province . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I hear agreement from the opposition, Mr. Speaker, so let's go on with what we have in here.

(1530)

In fact the opposition has already claimed that they could have taken \$2 billion a year or more from the oil industry over the last eight years. But, Mr. Speaker, the opposition is wrong. There has been no \$2 billion more for that opposition to take, or anything close to that.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that under the present oil royalty structure this government has received \$863 million more in oil revenue than we would have under the royalty system used by the NDP in 1981. Now we have achieved this by using a royalty structure that has stimulated tremendous growth in the oil industry. And since our election in 1982, there have been 7,000 wells drilled, 960 drilled in 1989 alone. In 1982 there were only nine oil wells drilled. Since 1982 \$1.9 billion has been invested in Saskatchewan's oil industry, and an average of 5,000 jobs have been created each year.

Mr. Speaker, our oil royalty system has stimulated growth in the oil industry, and in turn we have increased oil revenues for the provincial treasury significantly and created thousands of jobs for Saskatchewan families. Stifling the oil industry with large tax increases would be

disastrous for families and small businesses all throughout Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I used to be a bulk fuel dealer and I know how the large oil companies react to increased taxes. You only have to look at the refinery that used to be in this city. The company I worked for moved that refinery out of this province, took 400 jobs with it because of the excessive tax load the previous government had on the oil industry.

Mr. Speaker, they vote with their feet. They either shut down all exploration or they leave for greener pastures. The ones left behind are the small producers. And what happens to them, Mr. Speaker? They go bankrupt. So in reality there are no huge tax revenues to be taken from the oil industry, which brings us back to the original problem of finding enough money to finance this \$2.5 billion deficit.

But even if we accept this fantasy that somehow over the past eight years the opposition could have extracted two additional billion dollars from the resource sector, let us see what that impact would be. Two billion dollars divided by eight is 250 million. So we can up the revenue side of this budget by 250 million and come up with a deficit now of \$2.25 billion, Mr. Speaker.

As you can see, I'm giving them every advantage I can. But the opposition leader, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has promised a balanced budget, so he must cut more. I know the member will support this move and I'm going to assume that he would cut the \$64 million investment in Saferco fertilizer program.

Still the opposition have a deficit of 2.2 billion, Mr. Speaker. How is the Leader of the Opposition going to balance the budget with a shortfall of \$2.2 billion?

Well we have the answer, Mr. Speaker, in his remarks to business groups in Regina and Saskatoon. In the question and answer session at the North Saskatchewan business association on March 7 of this year, the Leader of the Opposition outlined his plan for eliminating the debt.

He mentioned, Mr. Speaker, the things that I have already covered such as advertising and salaries, and then he concluded, and I quote:

Fourthly is the question that I'll only mention but you'll know why I'll only mention it, and not say any more about it, (it) is of course additional revenue by way of taxes.

Additional revenue by way of taxes, Mr. Speaker. That is the source of the \$2.2 billion shortfall, Mr. Speaker — taxes.

Now according to this year's budget papers, our entire tax revenue now amounts to only slightly over \$2 billion. In order to balance his budget, the member from Riversdale will have to raise Saskatchewan taxes by over 100 per cent — over 100 per cent — more than double the taxes that Saskatchewan people pay today. And I guess, Mr. Speaker, we can say the Leader of the Opposition is running to become the governor of "tax-us". Simply put, Mr. Speaker, the cost of the opposition's plans for

Saskatchewan taxpayers would bankrupt this province and drive all Saskatchewan people into poverty.

Now I can just imagine what the response to the speech will be. Well, Mr. Speaker, they will say that I've inflated the cost and unfairly interpreted their statements. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not true. I will be tabling my documents and I will be tabling my numbers so they can go through that because in fact they are correct. Because, Mr. Speaker, in fact I have completely ignored many NDP promises, like full compensation for all involved in the collapse of Principal Trust, and full scale public inquiries into everything which has any possibility of being controversial, and a \$500 million grant, not a loan, Mr. Speaker, but a grant to agriculture in Saskatchewan.

And as I have pointed out several times in my speech, I consistently selected the lower cost estimate when compiling my figures. Mr. Speaker, I know that the members opposite will say I'm being ridiculous to suggest that they would pay \$1.2 billion on the debt each year. But even if the member from Riversdale breaks his promise to eliminate the debt in 15 years, he would still be faced with a deficit of \$1 billion — \$1 billion to be taken from the taxpayers of this province each and every year.

Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative government budget that the Minister of Finance tabled in this House is an effective, practical, and one which addresses the reality of our situation, and finds a balance between this province needs and its resources. It too includes a deficit, but a much more rational one of \$363 million, Mr. Speaker.

Personally I do not believe in deficit budgeting, Mr. Speaker, but I realize that the negative economic influence that have faced us in recent years have made it a necessity. We cannot sacrifice our health care system nor our education system, and we must protect our Saskatchewan farm families.

Mr. Speaker, this budget does this and much more, while at the same time keeping expenditures as low as possible through careful, efficient use of our resources. I am particularly pleased, Mr. Speaker, that the budget addresses concerns of all citizens. It cannot be called a rural budget or an urban budget. It dramatically increases spending in health and education, and it firmly and clearly carries out our commitment — the commitment of the Premier, the commitment of this government — to protect the farm families of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I support this government . . . this budget. I'm proud to support this budget, and I know it will help Saskatchewan to continue to grow and prosper throughout the decade ahead.

Mr. Speaker, if the member from Riversdale can show me how he can balance his budget, considering all the promises he has made, I will go home and immediately put a big window in the east wall of my house, because the last time a miracle like this happened, a star rose in the East, and I don't want to miss it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you. I will be supporting the budget, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for listening.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me first of all say that it is a privilege to speak in this legislature once more. It's not a particular privilege to speak on this budget because I don't think the budget offers very much to the ordinary people of Saskatchewan and I will point that out during my deliberations.

The member from Wilkie who just spoke, Mr. Speaker, said, I wonder what the response of the members opposite will be. I can tell him what the response will be to that drivel and voodoo remarks that he made — there won't be any response to his particular remarks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — It's very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that he spent about five minutes, five minutes on the budget presented by his Minister of Finance and he spent the 45 minutes telling the people of Saskatchewan what he thought, what he thought the NDP would put forward.

And we saw, Mr. Speaker, in question period how ridiculous that member could be. Worked out an arrangement with the Premier of this province, worked out an arrangement with the Premier of this province to ask a question on the NFU and the Leader of the Opposition's position on agriculture. It wouldn't have been so bad, Mr. Speaker, but the Premier had the written response before him. The Premier had the written response before him.

I notice, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Finance again is talking from his feet. He had an hour and a half the other day. He had an hour and a half the other day and he blew it the other night, and now he feels he wants to get a second chance.

Well I can tell him, he doesn't have to worry about the member from Wilkie taking his place because with that kind of voodoo economics that he brought forward this afternoon, the member's only concern should be that if he moves five feet further back he will be right out of this legislature, and that is what's going to happen to him in the next election, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity today to wish a very happy anniversary to one of my constituents. She is celebrating her 29th anniversary today, and I wish I could be with her but I had to speak in the House here today. And I do want to wish her a very happy anniversary and a good day, and I will be seeing her on the weekend.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: — That's your wife . . .

Mr. Rolfes: — That is my wife, you're right . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and as the member opposite said, she's a lovely lady, and she certainly is. She chose very wisely.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to this afternoon address a few words to the constituents of Saskatoon South who I have had the privilege to represent for approximately 15 years. But, Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk a bit about gerrymandering and the drastic effects on democracy of a government that does away with the principle of democracy, and that is representation by population; or one person, one vote.

We experienced this in 1971 in Nutana South — that's what it was called at that time — when the then Thatcher government, aided and abetted by the present Minister of Justice, gerrymandered all the seats or most of the seats in Saskatchewan, mine particularly, Mr. Speaker. And I can remember very well when I put out my pamphlet on gerrymandering and I got a couple of phone calls from Liberals, and they said to me: look, Mr. Rolfes, that can't be true; no government would do that.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. The members aren't to use names of members, even of your own name, during your speech.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, they said to me, yes, they said to me that, look, a government simply wouldn't do that. No government, no government would take away the democratic principle on which this country has been built. But they did it, Mr. Speaker, in 1971, and I'll tell you what they did to my seat at that time.

We had 4,500 voters in that seat. They took the good portion of the west side of my seat, which was good NDP support, and threw it in with the member from Riversdale who had 16,000 voters — 16,000 voters. But, Mr. Speaker, the people, the people of Saskatoon South — Nutana South at that time — said, enough is enough, and they elected me in 1971.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we did was we set up an independent boundaries commission to make absolutely certain that this would not happen again, that the principle of democracy would be protected. And what did the government opposite do? They simply did away with the independent boundaries commission, set up a commission, Mr. Speaker, on which they had their own political hack on it who drew the boundaries. And that, Mr. Speaker, was a hack again of the Minister of Justice today, the same individual — the same individual Mr. Minister, the member from Lumsden, who did the gerrymandering in 1971 again is doing it today.

There is no reason, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the constituents of Saskatoon South, there is no reason why Clarence Avenue should be the dividing line in my constituency, absolutely none.

But, Mr. Speaker, what they have done is very calculatingly they have gerrymandered the constituencies, not only in Saskatoon, but we can see it in the province throughout rural Saskatchewan. And what they have done, Mr. Speaker, they have given 35 seats to rural Saskatchewan and only 29 to urban Saskatchewan, but there are more people in urban Saskatchewan.

The very principle of democracy has been abandoned by these people. And, Mr. Speaker, I think the people again

will rise up in this province and say to the members opposite, enough is enough.

(1545)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister said the other day, and I quote:

We could have followed the Government of Canada's example and shifted our fiscal problems onto others.

And then he went on and did exactly that. Then he went on and did exactly that! In the city of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, we will be affected by millions of dollars — millions of dollars that should be coming to our city are not coming.

To do away with the transit subsidy, Mr. Speaker, just does not make any sense. In a time when we want to conserve, when we want to protect our earth and the natural resources that are in it, instead of doing away with the subsidy as this government has done to transit, they should've increased it so that the local governments could reduce the fares and we'd have more and more people using the transit system and fewer and fewer people using their own vehicles. That's what we should have done. But oh, no. They did away with it.

Mr. Speaker, again we see this government, because they have very few seats in the urban areas — one I believe in Regina and one in Saskatoon . . . two in Regina and one in Saskatoon . . . actually only one in Regina. Mr. Speaker, that is why they're doing it. That's exactly why they're doing this. They don't care about the urban people. And this Premier time and time again has tried to put a division between urban and rural people — time and time again. Time and time again he has put labourer against farmer. It is divide . . . rule and divide. That's what he works on, this Premier has.

Mr. Speaker, what had the minister has done? He says he has been very generous with school boards and universities. Let me tell him, 3 per cent is not very generous when inflation is over 5 per cent; 3 per cent to the school boards, 3 per cent to the universities, and 3 per cent to SIAST is not being very generous.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to comment a little bit about libraries a little later. But I want to tell the people of Saskatchewan that when you average 0.4 per cent over five years, less than one-half of one per cent for provincial libraries, no one in their right mind — no one in their right mind — would come to the conclusion that these people are supportive of libraries in this province. No one.

Mr. Speaker, they just simply have taken the wrong priorities in this budget. The money is there. The member from Wilkie says, but where are you going to get the money? While he was speaking, Mr. Speaker, I did a very quick calculation on Weyerhaeuser — just on Weyerhaeuser. And the deal that this government has struck with Weyerhaeuser over 30 years, not counting the 20 kilometres of roads that we will have to build, not

counting those, what they have done is given \$432 million in subsidies to Weyerhaeuser.

And how do I come to that? Well the contract states that they will give \$240 million at 8 per cent for 30 years. Well no one gets money at 8 per cent. Not even our farmers get money from these people at 8 per cent; they charge them ten and three-quarters. But the multinational corporation, Weyerhaeuser, gets money at 8 per cent for 30 years.

If they were going to pay, if they were going to pay the going rate of 14 per cent today, if that was calculated over 30 years they would have to pay an additional \$432 million. That's how we're subsidizing Weyerhaeuser. Cargill. Cargill is exactly the same thing, Mr. Speaker.

So when the farmers, when the farmers say to this government, yes you have money, they are absolutely right — they are absolutely right. Why, Mr. Speaker, you yourself, you're a farmer. Why should you pay ten and three-quarter per cent? Do you have more money than Weyerhaeuser? I don't think you have; something I don't know then if you do have.

Mr. Speaker, Weyerhaeuser is one of the richest forest companies in United States. Do you think that's fair for them to get money at 8 per cent and you pay ten and three-quarters? Surely you don't, and neither do the members opposite if they were to only think for a moment and have the interest of the people of Saskatchewan at heart.

What did they do to home owners? They raised the interest rate to ten and three-quarter per cent, but Weyerhaeuser 8 per cent. Now where is the justice? Where, Mr. Speaker, are they coming from? There are many other areas, Mr. Speaker, where we certainly . . . mismanagement and waste.

We found out today, and you were in public accounts yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Found out yesterday, \$2.7 million expenditure, 95 per cent of which there was no legislative authority — none; no legislative authority. And when the Premier in question period today was asked about it he took notice. He took notice on all four questions because he doesn't want to answer about the corruption and mismanagement and waste of his government over the last eight years.

Mr. Speaker, it has been the incompetence — it's not the province, it's not the economic conditions, it's the incompetence of this Premier and the incompetence of the cabinet ministers opposite that have run this province into the hole of \$4.5 billion in our current account. It's the incompetence opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand why people are angry, why people are frustrated when they see the waste and the mismanagement and the wrong-headed decisions and policies of this government.

Mr. Speaker, why, why, for example — and I want to go back a few years — why, for example, in 1986 when the production loan program came in for farmers at \$25 an acre, why weren't cabinet ministers excluded from that? You can't tell me a cabinet minister making \$80,000

needs additional subsidy from the poor in this province. Why should the personal minimum wage, or why should the welfare individual subsidize a cabinet minister who's making 80 grand a year? Why should he subsidize the Premier, who also took the production loan program? He indicated that himself in a news conference. Why? And the people are asking over and over. Why should this happen? It shouldn't, Mr. Speaker, it shouldn't happen. And when we form the government, Mr. Speaker, those things will be done away with, and we will bring back justice for the ordinary citizen in this province.

Mr. Speaker, they are fed up with corruption, they are fed up with waste, they are fed up with incompetence. And it's time, Mr. Speaker, that we call an election and let the people decide.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address a few words now on the speech made by the Minister of Education yesterday, and I will elaborate more on education later on in my remarks. But it was interesting to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was very interesting to note when the Minister of Education spoke yesterday there was not a word on agriculture — not one word. There wasn't one word on privatization. And you know what happened in this legislature last year in privatization, and it was only because the people rebelled and the people said no to this government that we saved SaskPower.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — It was the efforts, Mr. Speaker, the combined efforts of the people of this province and the opposition that stopped this government from privatizing SaskPower. And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, should they win the next election again, SaskPower will be gone. SaskPower will be gone and so will SGI be gone. All they're doing is biding their time, hoping that they can sneak through, through the next election, not talk anything about privatization.

And I notice, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Regina South last year spoke well over an hour on privatization; not one word in his speech in the legislature the other day, not one word on privatization. But he is committed to privatization, and should he be a member of the government side next time, he will do everything he can to privatize SaskPower and to privatize SGI.

And I say to the people of Saskatchewan, just because they don't talk about it now, don't be fooled again. The Premier last time said in the 1986 election, we will not privatize SaskPower. What did he do? The first opportunity he got he tried to privatize it. And I say to the people of Saskatchewan, congratulations to you. You went out there. You signed the petitions. You supported the opposition and we stopped this government in its tracks.

But I note that the Minister of Education did not speak about agriculture or privatization, not one word from the Minister of Education about the debt of this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's advantageous to review where these people came from, what they inherited when they came to power in 1982. And the member from Regina

South knows well that there was \$139 million in the kitty when he took over, signed by Bob Andrew, the then minister of Finance, signed saying that there was \$139 million. And I know the member from Regina South, deep down in his heart agrees with me, but he won't say that publicly. But I know he agrees with me because I believe he's an honest individual.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what have they done to this province? What have they done to this province? Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the member from Regina Wascana what he and his colleagues have done to this province. Instead of a surplus of \$139 million in our current account, in our consolidated account, you now have a deficit of \$4.369 billion, over \$4,300 per man, woman, and child — \$4.369 billion, Mr. Speaker.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, what they've done in the long-term debt . . . the long-term debt has increased by about \$9.8 billion under this government — 9.8 billion. The total debt of this province in 1982 was only 3.3 billion; 3,300 per man, woman, and child, the lowest in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I noticed last night on the American news that the Americans were bemoaning the fact that they had a national debt amounting to the trillions of dollars. In fact they said that for every man, woman, and child it was \$12,000, and they thought that they were the highest indebted people in this world.

But I have news for the Americans. Oh no. Grant Devine is first. Pardon me. Pardon me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I apologize.

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I apologize. The Premier of this province is number one in that category too. He has indebted, he has indebted the people of this province to the tune of 13 to \$14,000 for every man, woman, and child — 13 to \$14,000. And I can't be more specific, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we don't have a look at all the details in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, the member also, the Minister of Education who represents the seat of Mayfair in Saskatoon, not one word about his city of Saskatoon; not one word did he speak about what this government has done for Saskatoon. And I don't blame him. I don't blame him because he didn't do very much for the city of Saskatoon. And, Mr. Speaker, if I was the Minister of Education in his position, I wouldn't speak about it either.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to now turn to agriculture. I'll spend a few minutes on agriculture. And I want to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I've had some very personal experiences over the last two or three years in what has happened in the agricultural situation. I think it is well-known that I do own some land and I don't mind saying so. I don't farm it any more; I've rented it out. And I've rented it, Mr. Speaker, out to my brother-in-law for the taxes and little more, because I know the situation that he is in. What . . . the agriculture crisis in this province is ripping families apart, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the debt must be taken care of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what this budget did for agriculture was to make the situation even worse. The problem out there is about a \$6 billion debt. You don't resolve that problem by saying to the farmers, here's another \$525 million at ten and three-quarters per cent, and put yourself further in debt. That is not a solution.

(1600)

What we needed and what the farmers needed was some cash — real, hard, cold cash is what they needed. To say to a farmer that's 200 or \$300,000 in debt, borrow another 50,000 or borrow another 20,000, is not a solution. And that's exactly what the farmers opposite have come up with. It's exactly what the members came up with on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, what we needed was debt relief, not more debt increase. What we needed was debt restructuring. And it's incumbent upon this Minister of Agriculture, the Premier, to go down to Ottawa and convince eastern Canada . . . and the associate deputy minister of Agriculture, to go down there and convince them that agriculture is an integral part of Canada and that they have an obligation to support Saskatchewan and the prairie provinces. And you don't do that by adding more debt to the farmers at ten and three-quarter per cent.

The least you could have done is said, all right, we'll treat you as we treated Weyerhaeuser and we'll give it to you at 8 per cent. Why at ten and three-quarters, when you've got lots of money for Weyerhaeuser? Mr. Speaker, what farmers need is a reduction in the high input costs that they have today. The input costs are simply too large. And the expenses involved in fertilizers and chemicals and machinery and fuel are simply too significant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the price of the commodity that they get.

And the last thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the high interest rates. I don't know why we can't go back to the early '60s in this country. I bought my house, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at \$13,650 — it's a 1,200 square foot home — and at an interest rate, I want to tell the minister from Rosthern, at a fixed interest rate of 6 per cent for 25 years.

Why can't we, why can't we today say to the financial institutions that they must. The federal government could pass legislation which says that the finance institutions must make available to each individual farmer a certain amount of money, let's say 250 or \$300,000 at 8 per cent, fixed interest rates. You say that to the financial institutions. We did it in the '60s. Why can't we do that to small-business people? Also 250 or \$300,000 at 8 per cent.

The financial institutions, the banks have made millions and millions of dollars in the last few years, and I know the members opposite will agree with me, while farmers have gone bankrupt.

We should apply that same principle, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to home owners. Why can't we say to home owners today, you can buy a house at \$100,000, fixed interest rate of 8 per cent for 25 years. Why can't we do that? That's what I'd like to see the associate deputy

minister of Agriculture go to Ottawa and fight for us. And you'll get some support on this side of the House if you come through with such a policy from the federal government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that did not happen. That did not happen and that doesn't seem to be a policy of this government. And therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you don't see any action from the federal government in this regard.

I say to the financial institutions that certainly, certainly, they have made sufficient profits on the backs of small-business people, on the backs of home owners, on the backs of farmers, and surely they can forgo some of those profits in hard, difficult economic times and make those fixed interest rates available to farmers and small businesses and home owners. If we had the will, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a way of doing it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish you would ask the member from Lloydminster to please not interrupt while I am speaking.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to now turn to another item, and that is the item on private vocational schools. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have now for a number of weeks talked to the Minister of Education on private vocational schools. We have a very serious situation out there. Literally dozens of people are being ripped off by private vocational schools.

I have written to the minister. The member from Prince Albert three years ago, three years ago when he was the critic for post-secondary education, asked of the then minister of Education, the now Minister of Finance, that he had to do something about our private vocational schools. Nothing was done until 1989 when he set up a committee, and that committee is still studying the situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I get annoyed, and we should all get annoyed, when people on welfare are encouraged by the Minister of Social Services to take programs in private vocational schools and those programs aren't worth the paper they are written on. They aren't worth the paper they are written on, and I'll tell you why.

First of all, there's no prerequisites required in some of these private vocational schools. Number two, the staff simply are not qualified. In some instances, I want to tell the members opposite, in some instances the staff person takes the class in the morning and teaches the class in the afternoon. These are qualified staff people?

Now I've noticed, I noticed in the Minister of Education's speech in this House that he said all qualifications of staff are perused by the Department of Education. Well I say to the Minister of Education, if that is the case then he better do a better job and his officials better do a better job.

So we don't have any prerequisite. If, for example, grade 12 is required to get into a program, they don't even ask whether you have grade 12, and they don't.

If, for example, you go for a security . . . a private

investigation, they don't even ask whether you've had a record. A student came to me the other day. He had gone through the security and private investigation course in Saskatoon. He had received a loan from the Department of Education and he couldn't get a job. Of course he couldn't get a job; he can't get bonded; he's got a criminal record, and yet they've given him a loan from the Department of Education.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will pursue this in estimates, the Minister of Education, in a letter he wrote to me, indicated that \$22.2 million of student loans went to private vocational schools last year. That is where a lot of the increase in expenditures for education is going, into private vocational schools that are very . . . it's very dubious of the value of the certificate that the individual receives. In many instances, when they take that certificate out into the business world, the business industry simply laughs at them.

And what is so sad, Mr. Speaker, is that these people on welfare . . . I had a meeting with 17 people a week ago last Saturday who asked to meet with me — 17 people who were attending a private vocational school; about six or seven of those were single parent mothers — they had received loans from the Department of Education of about 7 or \$8,000, and each one of them said that the program that they were in was useless. Each one of them knew that they were going to be another 7 or \$8,000 in debt unless the government forgave the loan.

And I want to make a comment on that. What's happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that in some of these private vocational schools they get a loan from the government. The private vocational school says, yes, come on in. One individual told me she didn't understand anything of the program because she wasn't qualified; she didn't have the prerequisites. They said to her, ah, don't you worry. Don't you worry. You'll get a certificate. You'll get through. They gave her a certificate. She attended 40 per cent of the classes; she got a certificate. What did the Department of Education do? Forgave the loan.

And what's the sense of it? That's corruption. That's rip-off. If it isn't ripping off the individual, it's ripping off the province. And there are millions of dollars involved, Mr. Speaker, millions of dollars.

And I say to the Minister of Education — and I have a lot of respect for this Minister of Education, a lot of respect — I say to him that he must act quickly to put those regulations into effect. Manitoba and Alberta did it in 1988 because they were running into a problem. This government should have acted in 1987 when we asked them to.

Those regulations should be in effect today, where we say to the private vocational schools: you will have prerequisites, you will have qualified staff, we will approve the standards of your programs. We will do it. The certificate, Mr. Speaker, must be recognized by the industry out there.

And lastly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those regulations must give some assurance to the individuals that there is some

opportunity, some opportunity at least for employment. There is no sense in putting out another 400 CNAs (certified nursing assistants) or cosmetologists if the market out there is already flooded with those.

And I think the Minister of Education, when he looks at the application for loans, must look at those circumstances, those conditions, and say, no, the program simply doesn't measure up to our standards.

And these individuals, Mr. Speaker, have been ripped off too long. And I want to say to those people out there, yes, the government will get its welfare rolls down by forcing you or encouraging you to go to private vocational schools. And if you don't pass, I know you will be stuck, I know you will be stuck with that money, with that loan, with that debt, but it's not your fault. It's the fault of this government.

I had a 45-year-old woman come to my office; she was in tears. She went into a private vocational school, Mr. Speaker, into a program that she simply could not handle. She was ridiculed by the staff, she did not finish the course, but she had taken a loan from the Department of Education. She now owes the Department of Education \$6,000. She's had a nervous breakdown; she's seeing a psychiatrist. The Department of Education has put a collection agency on her. She's lost her car. She's working for minimum wage for about 20 hours a week. And they have the audacity, the nerve to say to her and force her, putting the pressure on her to pay back her student loan.

That program she had entered, number one, didn't have the prerequisites that it should have had. She couldn't do it. And that woman is shattered, Mr. Speaker, because of the lack of action by this Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know what it takes for this government to take some action in some of these instances. I mean, the proof is there; the examples are there. And I heard the Minister of Education in his speech say the other day that overall the private vocational schools are giving a good program. I grant him that there are some who do, but how does the public out there know? How does the public know which ones are good and which ones aren't? And when they get you in the office, as one former staff member said at my news conference, she said her job was to sell. Once that person came in the office, don't let that person out. Her job was to sell the program.

Mr. Speaker, that is unfair, totally unfair, and I think that the minister must take action. The \$22.2 million, certainly some of that money went to good private vocational schools. How much of it went the schools that are very questionable? We don't know, but I intend to find out in estimates. I will ask the minister how much money went to Bridge City College. I want to know how much money went to Victory Manor. I want to know how much money went to a good school. And I also want to weed out those schools that simply do not meet the standards that we expect. And I expect the minister to give me those answers during estimates.

The people out there are fed up. Those 17 students that I

met with have asked me to set up a meeting with the Minister of Education. Granted, my letter was only delivered to him about five days ago, but I need an answer from him as to whether or not he's going to meet with them. One of them is from his own constituency; the others are from various parts of Saskatoon and outside of Saskatoon.

(1615)

I want him to meet with them and I want him to give them the assurances that he will act immediately to implement those regulations pertaining to private vocational schools, so that we give the assurances to people out there that when they apply for a program, they know that there are high standards, they know that there are qualified staff, and they know that when they get a certificate it will be accepted by the industry out there and not simply that the industry will laugh at them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also turn to another part of my address this afternoon and that is to address the area of universities. Mr. Speaker, our two universities — and I can speak more of the University of Saskatchewan because it has a longer history — have graduated some very well-known individuals, people who have taken their place in the business world, in the academic world, in the health world. And they have made names for themselves right across this world — very, very high quality graduates who have made their mark in the world.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is some fear, and that is not just from me — that is from the present president of the University of Saskatchewan. There is some fear that the quality of our graduates is being compromised because of the lack of funding and the lack of commitment by this government, the lack of commitment by this government.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to spend very much time — I did this last year — but every one of us, I think, who had his car parked out front of the Legislative Building had this pamphlet on the windshield. And it says . . .

An Hon. Member: — Just the NDP.

Mr. Rolfes: — The member from Lloydminster is interfering again. The reason they didn't give you one is because they didn't have any pictures in it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — There's only writing on this one. Sorry about that, but that's the way it was.

Mr. Speaker, I see the Minister of Finance is also interested in what I have to say, and I'm glad he's here. Mr. Speaker, the students of the University of Regina have said on their pamphlet: "The students are ready. How about the government?"

In the budget, the government was not ready; the government was not ready. Did they provide for a student centre at the U of R? No. It was promised by the Minister of Finance and by the Premier when they made a special trip to the U of R and they promised that it would come immediately. They promised that in the 1986 election.

Immediately after the election it was cancelled.

They have also, Mr. Speaker, asked for a new fine arts building. Did they meet that request? No, they didn't.

Mr. Speaker, the president of the University of Regina said that he needed at least a 4 per cent increase plus the government had to take care of the debt at the U of R. Didn't get 4 per cent; they only got 3-point-some per cent. We don't know exactly how much they're going to get because of the enhancement fund. I'm going to say a word about the enhancement fund a little later.

Mr. Speaker, if we want two universities in this province and if we want high quality university, high quality education, then we have to have the will to pay. We have to have the will to fund those universities, Mr. Speaker, and we have not done that.

The Minister of Finance is clapping and he says, 3 per cent is sufficient. He is saying that 3 per cent for the university is sufficient. It certainly isn't.

Let me remind the Minister of Finance, and I have before me here, February 2, 1990, from the *Star-Phoenix*, "U of S fees could sky-rocket":

Tuition fees at the University of Saskatchewan could rise 30 per cent over the next three years unless the provincial government increases operating grants or programs are slashed.

Even with tuition hikes (even with tuition hikes) and continued enrolment quotas, the university will need a 23.8 per cent or \$30 million increase in its operating grant over the next three years.

Did you do that? No you did not; no you did not.

An Hon. Member: — We've got two more years, Herman.

Mr. Rolfes: — Oh, the Minister of Finance . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The Minister of Finance should not be continuously interrupting the member for Saskatoon South. At the same time I remind the member for Saskatoon South that it does not add to the debate if he's going to debate with everybody who makes a comment. So I ask the co-operation of members on both sides, but most particularly those who are interrupting the member from Saskatoon South.

Mr. Rolfes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a fellow colleague, you know how difficult . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I'm going to ask the Minister of Finance once more to cease interrupting the member from Saskatoon South.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, the point that I want to make is this. The new president of the U of S has said that he will need substantial increases, \$30 million in the next three years, in order that he can carry on offering quality education to the students and the people of Saskatchewan. This has not happened. He needed an 8.5

per cent increase. And as I said before, I don't know just how much they will get out of that enhancement fund, but even if we are very generous, the most they will get is about a 3.8 per cent total.

I want to say to the Minister of Finance, last year in question period . . . or pardon me, in estimates, I asked the Minister of Finance whether or not the portion, that portion of the enhancement fund that went to the U of S and the U of R, whether that would be included in the base funding for those universities next year, that meaning this year. And we got pretty good assurance that he would.

And I have discussed this with members of the University of Saskatchewan, and they got complete assurances from the Department of Education that if they met certain conditions, then the enhancement portion that they received last year would be put in their base funding this year. That was not done. That was not done.

I want to say to the Minister of Finance that, had he done that, the base that he would be starting with this year would be \$155 million — 155 million. But his new base, his new base with his 3 per cent increase, is only 153 million. So, Mr. Speaker, the universities can't exist, they simply can't exist and offer quality education with the underfunding and the lack of commitment by this government. It simply can't be done.

Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to the attention of the members opposite what the Hon. Minister of Education said a little while ago when, I believe, he was speaking to the University of Saskatchewan students. And I quote from the *Star-Phoenix* of February 9, 1990. He said:

Students denied entry into universities because of quotas could, as early as this fall, take their first- and second-year courses at regional colleges, says Education minister, Ray Meiklejohn.

He said that they would be taking their first and second year out in regional colleges. All right, let's accept that. And he gave a 5.8 per cent to regional colleges. But what did he do? The delivery mode for distance education is SCAN, Saskatchewan Communications Advanced Network. That's the model that you're going to use for delivering it. He cut that budget by 33 per cent — \$1.5 million.

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to give quality education to people in rural Saskatchewan through regional colleges, they also need resource centres. They need up-to-date libraries. It is not a matter of just pouring in the facts and say, now you'll get a certificate. No, they need to be able to research. They need to be able to develop these ideas. You can't do that without adequate resource centres or adequate libraries.

And as I've indicated, their library funding has increased less than one-half of one per cent over the last five years. And the letters that I have been receiving from regional libraries — and I know the minister has been receiving these — clearly indicates that they do not have the volumes of books that are required in order to meet the Canadian standards. They don't have them.

This budget does nothing. In fact, Mr. Speaker, those libraries, in many instances I think, will have to shut down their doors for certain days of the week because the budget will not be there, or they will have to go to their local towns in their local municipalities and ask them to substantially increase the property tax in order that they can increase the volumes in their libraries.

Now I say to the Minister of Education, you can't on the one hand say that we are not going to support the universities of Saskatchewan and Regina to the extent that they need in order to do away with the quotas, and then on the other hand not provide the mode of delivery and the libraries in rural Saskatchewan where you say you are going to educate students for the first and second year.

I want to direct a question to the Minister of Education. What happens, Mr. Minister, if you are successful in rural Saskatchewan? Let's say another 500 students next year take first-year university classes and the following year another 500 take first and second year. You now have a thousand students taking first and second years in two years. Where are you going to accommodate those students in the third year? You have offered no incentive, no additional funding to the U of S to build additional facilities. Where are you going to put those students?

They haven't, Mr. Speaker, they haven't gone beyond this budget to look at the implications of what they are doing. And I know the president of the U of S has made these people aware of it because he made me aware of it. When I met with him he said, all right, I don't necessarily agree that that's the best education that students can get, but maybe for the first and second year.

There is more to education, those of you who went to university, you know that there's more to education than just the acquisition of knowledge. It's the whole atmosphere, the whole aura of a university campus. The intercommunication that you have with students, not just from Saskatchewan, but from Canada and world-wide.

And maybe in the first and second year we don't need that, but I say to you people three years from now these students will not be able to be accommodated at our campuses. You're not building. We need a building at the U of S to house these students. We need a building at the U of R and that construction has to start now. Three years from now we'll have a crisis on our hands. And I ask you people to give some thought to that and make sure that we accommodate those students.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many things that I could talk about in post-secondary education. I will spend a lot more time in estimates on it.

The Minister gets rather annoyed when I say that we are one of the lowest on a per capita basis of funding of education in Canada. And he says the tax foundations are all wet. Well there are two or three other organizations who say that no matter what criteria you use, Saskatchewan ends up seventh, eighth, or ninth of the provinces for funding in education, and that also includes post-secondary education.

I have a study here by the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada, who indicate very clearly that in the '70s in Canada the expenditures on post-secondary education, gross expenditures of a province, was about 5.7 per cent. It's now in the 3.7 per cent. And Canada . . . pardon me, and Saskatchewan comes in about eighth in that ranking, comes in about eighth.

I will recognize, Mr. Speaker, that this government has put some money into buildings at the U of S. We haven't seen very much at the U of R but we certainly have seen some at the U of S, and for that the people of Saskatchewan are thankful. But buildings by themselves do not add up to good quality education. They don't add up to good quality education.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1630)

Mr. Rolfes: — You need to provide them with good quality staff. And there are lots of indications here, Mr. Speaker, that in the very near future Saskatchewan will not only be short of thousands of teachers in grades 1 to 12, but that we will not have sufficient professors at the Ph.D. level here in this province because the salaries that we are offering are much too low, are much too low.

We have to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we are committed to quality education, we have to provide additional salaries, adequate salaries to attract the best. We can't afford to let them go to Alberta or British Columbia or Ontario, and that is what is happening. They are fed up. They are absolutely fed up with what is going on in this province at the present time.

Mr. Speaker, not only do the quotas have an impact on university students who can't enter and then they have to go into the work-force — and sadly enough there simply isn't any work available so they leave this province, and we will see very few of those coming back — Mr. Speaker, it also is having an impact on the high school situation. We have now in some of our schools, 20 per cent — 20 per cent — of the grade 12 students coming back, not because they don't have completed their grade 12 but because they don't meet the entrance requirements at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina.

An Hon. Member: — What schools would these be, Herman?

Mr. Rolfes: — Well I don't mind saying it. The schools for example in Saskatoon, schools in Saskatoon have in the neighbourhood of 20 per cent — 20 per cent of the grade 12's going back to upgrade.

And, Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no validity in the argument that those people make that say a 65 per cent average isn't high enough to have success at the university because it has been demonstrated time and time again in the past that many, many — a large percentage — of the people with a 65 average in grade 12 do very well at the universities. That does not diminish the fact, Mr. Speaker, that our grade 12 students shouldn't struggle to get the 75's and 80's and 90's. Not at all. But

why are we denying, why are we denying an opportunity for our young people to receive a university education because this government has its priorities all mixed up?

They are more concerned about giving money to Cargill, money to Millar, money to Weyerhaeuser, and as I indicated before \$432 million in subsidy over 30 years to Weyerhaeuser — \$432 million. Mr. Speaker, yesterday or the day before when the Minister of Education spoke, he said, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education made a comparison of funding for universities when we were the government and now when they are the government.

Let me, Mr. Speaker, for the edification of the Minister of Finance, let me just read to him what happened in 1980 to 1983. In 1980-81, 8.5 per cent increase; 1981-82, 12 per cent increase, operating grants; 1982-83, 17 per cent increase, for an average of those last three years of an NDP government of 12.5 per cent. And we had a balanced budget, in fact, we had a surplus.

Mr. Speaker, let's take the last three years of this government for universities. In 1988-89, 2 per cent; 1989-90, 2 per cent; 1990-91, 3 per cent, for an average of 2.3 per cent. And if you want to add in the enhancement fund, which the Minister of Finance does not include in the base funding, you may get up to 2.7 or 2.8 per cent.

Compare that to 12.5 per cent for the universities in operating grants when we were the government. There is no commitment to post-secondary education by this government. Mr. Speaker, if there were, they wouldn't be giving an average increase of 2.3 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the last item I want to talk about is SIAST, the great invention of the present Minister of Finance. We know, Mr. Speaker, what happened in 1987 when his officials herded people into rooms like cattle, like cattle — that's what it was — herded people who had 25 years experience, herded them into a room and told them in 10 minutes to be out of the office and not to show their face there again. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they walked in with their red crates and put the things in, the possessions of some of the people into those boxes, and told them to get out. Twenty-five years of service.

And what did they do, Mr. Speaker? They replaced some of these very valuable and qualified people with their own political hacks, people, Mr. Speaker, who had absolutely no experience, no experience in post-secondary education or technical school, no experience in administration, and they wonder. They wonder why they're having problems. They wonder why they're having problems.

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

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Can the hon. member enlighten the legislature as to what people he is referring to when he says they . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. member is not permitted to ask a question unless the member speaking approves. Order.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member answer a question then please?

Mr. Rolfes: — No I will not. But I want to make a comment, Mr. Speaker, I want to make a comment. That is the same minister that instructed his official . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. member responded to the minister's query. The debate continues. Shouldn't be any more interference.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, who was then the minister of Education, is well aware of what transpired in 1987 and how he mistreated long-term civil servants in the reorganization of SIAST, and how he instructed, how he instructed the people how they were to go about firing these people. That is well documented.

And I am not, Mr. Speaker, today going to name some of those officials. He knows who they are because he was the one that instructed others to carry out his dirty work for him.

Mr. Speaker, there is a real problem in SIAST. Was talking to an individual the other day and, Mr. Speaker, I used to work in a high school as a counsellor and we were very proud, very proud to send students to any one of those technical schools — to Kelsey, Saskatchewan Technical Institute at Moose Jaw, Wascana at Regina. We were extremely proud because they matched the standards of any other technical school across Canada, any other school. They matched the Mount Royal College in Calgary, SAIT (Southern Alberta Institute of Technology) in Calgary, NAIT (Northern Alberta Institute of Technology) in Edmonton — no difficulties.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the teachers can't have that same pride any longer because the programs have suffered so severely. And what have they done, Mr. Speaker, they have taken out many of the good programs that were over-subscribed in 1987, over-subscribed by the students. They have taken those and put them into private schools, and I told you what I thought of some of those private schools before, where we have no prerequisites, no standards of programs, staff not qualified, and the certificate is simply not accepted at all.

Mr. Speaker, they have ruined the technical schools in this province by their arrogant and — well, I don't want to say it — by their arrogance in dealing with the reorganization of technical schools in this province. Mr. Speaker, what they have done is unacceptable.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the members opposite that you have an opportunity, you still have an opportunity to change direction. You still have an opportunity to say to the universities and say to SIAST and say to those librarians out there: yes we made a mistake; we didn't fund you adequately, and we're going to do it; we're going to bring in supplementary estimates and we're going to do it.

Mr. Speaker, this budget does not address the problems of Saskatchewan. It does not address the agriculture problem by giving relief in the debt of the farmers as I've

indicated. It does nothing in giving cold, hard cash to those farmers out there who're going bankrupt — 4,400 farmers in Saskatchewan went bankrupt last year. And what is your answer? We'll give them more debt. That is not a solution.

Our universities, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't be a bit surprised . . . Mr. Speaker, I would not be a bit surprised if the president of the U of S will have to eliminate colleges at the U of S because of lack of funding. Don't be surprised, ladies and gentlemen opposite, that you will hear the president of the U of S saying that he has to eliminate colleges because of the lack of funding over the last number of years by your government, but particularly this year.

Mr. Speaker, this problem . . . Oh, pardon me. This budget does not address the problem of jobs and the exodus of people in this province. It does not address, in any way, shape, or form, the problems that we have in education. I cannot and I will not support this budget. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into this debate on the budget. And I would firstly, Mr. Speaker, like to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Finance, for the budget that he brought down last Thursday evening.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — I want to say, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that the majority of people who attended the budget speech in this legislature, and to those people who watched the budget speech on television last Thursday night, I think it would be safe to say, Mr. Speaker, that most fair-minded people, after hearing the comprehensive outline of the budget and the finances of the province of Saskatchewan, would say, yes indeed, for the times, Mr. Speaker, given all of the circumstances, given where Saskatchewan is today, that budget was most appropriate for the people of Saskatchewan.

I say most appropriate, Mr. Speaker, for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, most appropriate, Mr. Speaker, for the farmers of Saskatchewan, the students of Saskatchewan, the senior citizens of Saskatchewan, the youth and the elderly, the working people, men and women of all ages and all categories in all segments of our society.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, I think that you would know that the task of making a budget is a difficult one in these troubled economic times; these economic times that have difficult international price perspectives put on them; these difficult times that have natural forces beyond our control, Mr. Speaker, and I refer to drought upon drought and many of the harsh realities that have gone our way over the last few years.

Mr. Speaker, realizing the challenge that has been faced by my colleague, I am impressed, and I am heartened by it, Mr. Speaker, by the budget document that he presented

to this House. Mr. Speaker, that document is a tribute to the Minister of Finance. He has met the challenge confronting him through three types of things, and I will talk to you tonight, or this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, about some courage, about compassion, and about consultation.

And, Mr. Speaker, it takes courage and it takes political will in these times to eliminate some programs that were popular programs, programs that the public and the populace of Saskatchewan indeed thought were right, programs that the people most appreciated. It takes courage, Mr. Speaker, to do what is right. And I have every confidence, Mr. Speaker, that the public of Saskatchewan recognize the difficult choices and the difficult decisions that had to be made.

I would use for an example, Mr. Speaker, another one of those difficult decisions that had to be made was the overall spending level of many government departments. Contained in that budget, Mr. Speaker, is something like 21 government agencies that have either been frozen or reduced — reduced somewhat.

(1645)

Mr. Speaker, those are not easy things. Heavens above, I think every human being alive knows that it's easy to spend money. It's nice to spend money, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to do good. But, Mr. Speaker, there comes a time when you have to very responsibly look and see, and do it very objectively as well, Mr. Speaker, what is right for the people of Saskatchewan, what is in the best long-run and short-run interest of the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, taxpayers across this province from one end of it to the other said: Mr. Government, you've got to get a control on government spending; Mr. Government, notwithstanding all of the calls of the opposition time and time again, totally irresponsible calls, Mr. Speaker, by the opposition over the last seven years — whatever you're spending, it's not enough; we need more, we need more, we need more.

Mr. Speaker, are those the words of a responsible opposition? I say to you, no, they were not, Mr. Speaker. Was the budget the words of a responsible government? I say yes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, it took some political will to control some of the spending with respect to government construction projects. It took political will to do that, Mr. Speaker. Had we listened to the opposition, government spending would have increased significantly at a time when the taxpayers cannot afford it. Mr. Speaker, another one of the difficult decisions it had to make.

Mr. Speaker, that demonstrates to me some courage, strength, some determination, some sense of purpose, some sense of direction, some sense of responsibility. Those are the words that I would like to use this afternoon to sum up this budget.

Mr. Speaker, does that have to mean just because a

government has tightened its own belt, just because a government has looked responsibly to the will of the taxpayer, does that mean that that government does not have to be compassionate? No, Mr. Speaker, the two are not mutually exclusive. You could have a government that has the courage to take difficult decisions, and yet a government that has compassion — compassion for the people of this province.

And that's another word that I feel applies to this budget, one of compassion, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to talk to you a little bit about the areas of compassion; compassion for people like farm families. Contrary to the calls of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, inherent, innate in this budget is some real, true testimony to compassion for what our farmers and their families are going through in this very difficult time.

Compassion, Mr. Speaker, for the infirm and the elderly. Compassion, Mr. Speaker, for people like our students and our hungry kids.

Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Finance has singled out three key, important areas in this budget, and I'd like to talk to you a little bit about those areas prior to me going into my own particular budget area, that being the environment.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk to you today about one of the corner-stones of the whole economy of this province, one of the corner-stones of the budget, Mr. Speaker, and that being agriculture. Mr. Speaker, there's no question our farmers are hurting today. Our farm families are hurting today. And in turn, Mr. Speaker, our farm businesses, businesses directly or indirectly related to agriculture, are hurting.

Our towns, our villages, our hamlets are suffering the consequences of serious agricultural problems — places in my constituency like my home town of Melfort. Small towns like Naicam, St. Brieux, Ridgedale, Star City, Beatty — these small rural communities, Mr. Speaker, have felt this impact. Places like Cupar where I was . . . or, pardon me, Quinton, where I was the other night. All of these rural places in Saskatchewan are feeling this. And, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, and through him this government, are duty-bound, are absolutely duty-bound to do what we can to ease that hurt, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan I think we do this out of instinct, out of a natural reaction when our friends and our families and our towns and villages and businesses are hurting. It doesn't take a rocket scientist, Mr. Speaker; it doesn't take a lot of debate in our minds, Mr. Speaker, we do this as a natural reaction. Agriculture is Saskatchewan, compassion is Saskatchewan, instinctively helping our friends and neighbours.

And, Mr. Speaker, in this budget I think there is absolute proof positive of this government's commitment to agriculture. And I talk to you this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, about direct spending on agriculture and tax assistance to the farm sector of more than \$400 million. This is separate and apart from the seeding loan programs, but \$400 million in the agricultural budget of this year.

I believe that that is a significant amount of money. Every member on this side of the House wishes that we could have more money to spend on agriculture, but we've got 400 million this year, Mr. Speaker. In addition to that you have a farm seeding program, a spring crop seeding program that will allocate more than \$525 million at subsidized interest rates to farmers who are having a difficult time in obtaining credit from traditional lending institutions.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear, it is absolutely crystal clear to me that this government, on behalf of the taxpayers from all over Saskatchewan, has taken a major step once again to go to the wall to back our farmers, our farm families, and our farm businesses through these kinds of expenditures.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, furthermore I was pleased to see this entire Assembly pass a unanimous motion respecting agriculture and the involvement, the absolutely necessity for involvement, by the federal government with respect to immediate cash injections of \$500 million prior to seeding. And Mr. Speaker, this is not an unreasonable request to our federal government. Mr. Speaker, this is a very necessary request to our federal government.

I believe that it is the federal government's responsibility when you consider that other countries, other major countries, the United States of America, for instance, where their taxpayers from all around the United States are backing their farmers through the export enhancement program. When you've got all the citizens of Europe, of western Europe, banding together through their tax dollars, subsidizing their farmers, Mr. Speaker, it is crystal clear to me that it is the responsibility of the federal government and it is the responsibility of us as legislators in this Legislative Assembly, together with farm groups, rural councillors, rural reeves, municipal people, all people from across Saskatchewan, that we have solidarity on this absolute commitment that we need from the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, there is no question. Agriculture was one of the mainstays of this budget.

Second, Mr. Speaker, is the subject of education. Where is the future of this province? Where is the future of this country? There is no place to look, no place to look other than to the young people, the youth of our province, Mr. Speaker. And if there's one thing that they need, Mr. Speaker, it is the finest education system available anywhere. We must be competitive, Mr. Speaker. We must have our young people well educated. Mr. Speaker, we are a certain, certain lot here in Saskatchewan. We've got an abundance of good values and good qualities, and we're good, hard, honest-working, dedicated, and committed people and, Mr. Speaker, all we need is a system in place to better educate our young people.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I look at this budget, when I look at this budget that's contributing almost \$900 million to education, I'd say that's a tremendous amount of money.

I'd say, Mr. Speaker, it's almost 20 per cent of our entire budget is spent on education.

Members opposite will cry and whine and make believe that there's cut-backs in education, make believe that the province could afford significantly more, close their eyes to where we'd really find additional moneys. But, Mr. Speaker, being responsible, an increase of, I think, \$36 or \$40 million in education, up to nearly \$900 million — 888 I think it is — Mr. Speaker, that's a fair commitment to education, and that's a fair commitment to the future of this province and to our young people, most specifically.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, this budget also contains something else to do with young people, very young people, Mr. Speaker, and I'm talking about hungry children. I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker, nearly three-quarters of a million dollars — \$750,000 — being spent on the needs of hungry children, Mr. Speaker.

And I commend, Mr. Speaker, the new Minister of the Family. The new Minister of the Family, Mr. Speaker, who has travelled the width and the breadth and the length of this province talking to families, seeing where there is real hunger. And, Mr. Speaker, certainly there is, not all over the province, but, Mr. Speaker, there are pockets. There are those in need. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that there's hardly a taxpayer in this province whose heart and pocket-book doesn't go out to hungry children when there's a real need for it.

And, Mr. Speaker, members opposite like to dramatize like a Hollywood movie the whole subject of hungry kids. But, Mr. Speaker, here's something that's not showmanship; this is not a Hollywood movie production. What this is, Mr. Speaker, is real, honest, hard-working men and women paying their tax dollars to the extent of nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars to feed our hungry children here in Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan way, Mr. Speaker — out of compassion, Mr. Speaker. And it's nothing to sneeze at.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to health care, Mr. Speaker. And there's nearly one-third of this budget is spent on health care. And here again, contrary to cries of the NDP, cut-backs in health care, not nearly enough money in health care, well, Mr. Speaker, we are spending \$1.5 billion on health care. We are spending nearly one-third of our budget on health care.

Mr. Speaker, I forget what it adds up to on a daily or an hourly basis, but I think hourly it's something like \$175,000 an hour, \$3 million dollars a day or thereabouts, tremendous amounts of money on health care.

Why is this, Mr. Speaker? It's because there is a firm dedication and commitment on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party in the province of Saskatchewan to this thing called health care, Mr. Speaker. And those dollars are proof positive of a real genuine commitment to health care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker, in this . . .

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, there is more money here for home care, more money for nursing homes, more for hospitals, more for the people that work in these institutions, the real care givers, the real compassionate people, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order, order. It being 5 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I say that this budget was not drafted in the back rooms of any cabinet or any caucus or any political party. Where this budget was really drafted, Mr. Speaker, was out in the open, was out in consultation with groups of people all across this province, and I commend the Minister of Finance for those pre-budget meetings. I commend the people of Saskatchewan for their input into this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I'm here to make a prediction. The 1990s, Mr. Speaker, will be a period of mass consultation with the public, not only across Saskatchewan as set by this example in the budget, but this will happen across Canada and across North America. Mr. Speaker, and members opposite scoff at Consensus Saskatchewan. And I'd like to stop for just a minute or two and use this budget as an example of a mini Consensus Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there's so many choices to make, so many difficult decisions to make, so many unanswered questions. So where does a true government that is caring and compassionate for the people go to help find some of the answers? A true, caring, compassionate government goes to the people. And the best example that I can think of in recent history was the Minister of Finance going all across this province consulting with people to find out what their ideas were, what their choices were, and where this budget should take them.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is why this budget, although not satisfactory to all, has been accepted for the most part, by and large by the public of Saskatchewan in a very positive way. Mr. Speaker, I believe that to be the case.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, and if we carried this example of how the Minister of Finance consulted with the people, brought a budget that is for the most part satisfactory to the people of Saskatchewan, I believe that Consensus Saskatchewan, dealing with other complex issues, will have the same results, Mr. Speaker. It is based on the same type of consultative mode that I predict is being started today with Consensus Saskatchewan, and will very, very much be the way of the 1990s, because there's difficult questions that will be asked all throughout the 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn now to a priority of my own, something that I believe is a priority of the people of Saskatchewan, something that has been noted in newspapers around the world recently, noted in all types of media recently, noted as being the subject of regional, national, international, and indeed global conferences. I'm talking to you this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, about this big thing that we call the environment.