

EVENING SITTING

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 3

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter that **Bill No. 3 — An Act to amend The Education and Health Tax Act** be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to on division, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 4

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter that **Bill No. 4 — An Act to amend The Income Tax Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I think most members in the Chamber are aware, Mr. Speaker, the Act before us was integral to the previous one that was being discussed in this Chamber. And certainly the members of the opposition I think have done their best, Mr. Speaker, over the last number of hours to put the case forward that the synchronization of our E&H (education and health) tax along with the federal GST (goods and services tax) made sense in many instances for people in the society in which we live today.

It made a lot of sense, Mr. Speaker, because of the ability to spread the tax load more evenly across our society and to give the sectors in our society that have the best ability to generate jobs, have the best ability to generate the income that is so necessary for government in Saskatchewan, to fulfil its services to the people. The Bill that we're talking about here is the repeal of the child tax credit that went to low income families because of the synchronization of the two taxes.

One of the biggest problems facing government today, Mr. Speaker, whether in Saskatchewan or I believe all across Canada, is the ability to have a tax system that is fair. And certainly the question of fairness becomes all that more important when we're talking about low income people.

My colleague, the member from Maple Creek, in his delivery this afternoon on this subject, went through a number of circumstances about people on lower incomes and how the fact that synchronization definitely had a positive effect on our lower income people in this province.

Everyone in the province is a consumer, Mr. Speaker. We all consume usually according to the amount of disposable income that we have. And I've always felt, Mr. Speaker, when it came to the question of taxation, that you're always better to tax spending than you are to tax earnings. When you tax earnings at source, you deduct

the ability of people to make choices. You deduct the ability of people to take their income and spread it through the rest of our society in a way that is beneficial.

I also think that you, when you deduct at source, when you deduct on income, that you also take away some of the initiative that most people in Saskatchewan feel about getting up in the morning and going to work. And it doesn't matter if it's the farming community that I come from and I'm so familiar with or the small business community where people have traditionally had family-run operations where many members of the family, for instance, will participate that particular business, or whether you're a labourer and you are out there working basically now till some time in July in order to have take-home pay for yourself. Because the level of taxation in government — both federal, provincial, municipal, school, that type of thing — takes a very large segment, a very large segment, Mr. Speaker, of the disposable income of people. And most of those deductions through the current income tax system are done at source.

The question has always come along, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about people on the lower ends of the socio-economic scale about how you treat them the most fairly. And one thing is very obvious, Mr. Speaker, when you're talking about a consumer type of tax such as the GST is that the ability to tax people with the larger amounts of disposable income is there.

Traditionally through our tax system in Canada — and I remind all members that the primary tax system is instigated by the federal government in this country and provinces tag along in various ways — that that tax system, even through all its adjustments and machinations over time has probably still not been as fair as we would like. In other words, people at the higher income scales — through access to legal advice, access to good accountants — have always been able to structure their incomes in such a way that there is a certain amount of tax avoidance. And I think the numbers that were released by the federal Finance minister recently on the amount of back taxes owing by individuals across Canada clearly points out to us that there are some deficiencies in the tax system in our country.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, where you have a tax that taxes directly on the amount of money that you spend, you have the ability to tax those at the higher income level more because with more disposable income, they will tend to spend more money on goods and services than someone at the lower end. So when you make comparisons between those two different opposites in the socio-economic scale, you can see that that type of taxation system is weighted in favour of people at the lower end because they tend to purchase more basic necessities in life. They're concerned about food. They're concerned about clothing. They're concerned about heat and light and those basic things that are essential to all of us.

By doing away, Mr. Speaker, by doing away with the child tax credit, which I think most people who have studied this particular situation would agree, put more

money in the pockets of people with an income up to \$24,000 than they have under the present system of a side-by-side taxation system. For instance, Mr. Speaker, the tax on almost all children's toys that is in place today, with E&H, after this Bill is repealed, Mr. Speaker, was there before. But what will happen, Mr. Speaker, if this Bill is passed is that those people on that lower end of the scale will receive no benefit. The toys will still have the tax on them, but they will not receive the investment tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, I see no indication from the Minister of Finance, as he removes this particular benefit to people in that category. He has not said how he will replace it. And I think it goes back to the argument, Mr. Speaker, that was made by many of the members opposite as we talked about the various ways that government taxes its people and about the fairness aspect that goes along with it. If the minister is going to repeal synchronization of E&H with the GST, he must replace that loss in income. If the minister is going to take the child tax credit away from people on the lower end of the income scale, then he must replace that benefit in some other way. Because one thing is for sure, Mr. Speaker. As it was mentioned by one of my colleagues, death and taxes are about the only two constants in life.

And I am sure that any new tax instituted by the Minister of Finance is going to impact on those people in some way. If it's going to be an increase in the E&H tax, then that E&H tax will hit lower income people as well as higher income people. If it is to be an increase in the gasoline tax, it will impact on lower income people as well as higher income people. But I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the impact, the amount of impact, the ratio of impact with taxes like that on all areas of our society are harder to bear on the low income side than they are by the high.

There was a recent study done by a committee of parliament in Canada. It was an all-party committee put together to study the ways that taxation affected various areas of our socio-economic strata. The governing party, the Conservative Party, brought forward a majority report on that committee saying that consumer-type taxation in conjunction with family tax credits was probably the fairest way to redistribute wealth in our society.

The New Democrats and the Liberals on that committee came forward with minority reports. The New Democrats not only endorsed that part of it; they even stronger suggested that the best way to handle people in our society on the lower end of the income scale was to take that tax credit system and boost it even further, that make it apply to other areas so that we can redistribute that wealth in a more fair manner to people in our society.

And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that an all-party committee of parliament would have that opinion, basically unanimously, that that was the best way that people that were disadvantaged in our society could better themselves and better their position in regards to how money in this country was redistributed. And I think, Mr. Speaker, as taxpayers, as all of us are, and the people that we represent, that that is always what you strive for, is fairness in that taxation system.

Mr. Speaker, the minister, as I said before, comes forward with the repeal of this particular child tax credit because he is doing away with synchronization.

I think it would have been important, Mr. Speaker, that during first reading of this Bill that the minister would have given some indication as to what the alternatives were, because I think there's a lot of people out there today that have been used to getting these cheques on a quarterly basis that are all of a sudden going to come to a sudden abrupt end and say, my God, what has happened here to my income.

And in the case of a two-parent family with two children, as the member from Maple Creek pointed out, that's a significant amount of money in a year. It's enough money to offset the 7 per cent that they would have paid on restaurant meals; the 7 per cent that they would have paid on clothing under \$300; the 7 per cent that they would have paid on books, novels, that type of thing. So, Mr. Speaker, obviously there's going to be some hardship incurred by people in our society.

And I say again to the Minister of Finance, given what we know of the repeal of this synchronization, and the lack of income that's going to be derived, given the budgetary pressures that are upon Saskatchewan, given the fact that most of our primary production in this province at this time cannot sustain a higher tax load — i.e., the farming public, our resource industries — where in the world is the minister going to get taxation moneys that will be as fair or fairer than what you had with a broadly applied consumer tax such as you had with the E&H harmonization, with the GST?

(1915)

And I don't believe the minister has that answer yet or perhaps he would have told the House. Because one thing is obviously clear to me and to the constituents that I represent. The middle class in this country is overtaxed at present; the ability to have entrepreneurship right now with the amount of disposable income that is available to our middle class is really tough. People are feeling that there is no advantage out there today in going forward and investing their money, their family's money into continuing or expanding an operation that is going to provide more employment, more economic opportunity, in that particular community. The middle class in this country of ours today feel that they have been taken advantage of.

And I think it's one reason, Mr. Speaker, that you saw such a reaction throughout our society to the introduction of the GST and then to the expansion of the E&H tax to items that had never been included in that list before. And I think people said, I have, as a middle class person in this country, paid my fair share.

We have some of the highest per capita costs as far as health and education and social services of any province in Canada. We also have one of the best systems and we've been able to convince people in our society over the last 30 or 40 years that it is in their best interest to make those sizeable tax contributions in order to have

that first-class system. But we see even with those very large contributions by the average taxpayer, Mr. Speaker, we have seen a further erosion of some of those basic things in life that we have taken for granted.

We see increasing pressures in the health care system and the education system. We know that we either have to change the way we do things or we're going to have to come up with more money. Something will have to give. And the middle class doesn't feel that it has any more to give.

Given that that is the scenario, Mr. Speaker, then what you have to have is some fair way of redistributing income. And without closing down entire sectors in the province, you're going to have to have some type of broad-based tax which is seen fair to all and which has the ability built within it to not take advantage of people at the bottom end of our socio-economic scales.

And, Mr. Speaker, when one adds up all of the choices and one looks at all the alternatives, clearly the tax credit was the most credible alternative. To have the tax credit in place, you also had to have the rest of that particular type of taxation system. Because it is very difficult, Mr. Speaker, on the present side-by-side E&H-GST system, to institute that level of family tax credit without knowing that the rest of us in society, the middle, the upper middle, the higher income brackets, are going to be taxed in a fair way to provide that income.

And as I said before in my comments, Mr. Speaker, the income tax system, which has been the traditional method in our country, has been found wanting. Most people find it overly complicated. They find that the brackets are either too narrow or too broad. And if, as I said before, Mr. Speaker, you have the wherewithal, you have been traditionally been able to find loopholes in that tax system that have allowed you to take advantage of the system.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to either have to overcome the method that income tax is collected upon so that people don't feel that they have worked over half of the year simply to satisfy the tax system, that they are only being taxed that way because they are in that middle category, or else, sir, we are going to have to come up with a new scheme, a new idea that will be considered fair.

And when one only looks around the world and look at how other jurisdictions have addressed this problem, it becomes very self-evident of what most of them have decided.

The entire European community of over 300 million people have decided that, as the price of membership in that particular community, that you must have a broadly based consumer type of tax system in place. And, Mr. Speaker, that broadly based type of consumer tax system in Europe can vary anywhere from the teens up to the low thirties as a percentage of what every last person pays on goods and services.

And I'm sure countries like Greece and Spain, as they came into the European community, went through many

of the same debates that we have in this country over the last couple of years.

But that community has shown its strength and resilience. It has beat us up in the agricultural sector for years and years and years because they have been able to harness the power of the consumer, the power of spending — albeit discretionary spending — and they have been able to develop those systems that allow them to subsidize their farmers far more than we do. They have been able to subsidize many of the systems, industrial systems, within their countries because of the power of that value added tax.

And certainly I think, Mr. Speaker, people at the lower end of the scale in the European community have faced many of the same problems that we do here in North America, and particularly Canada, and in Saskatchewan. And it would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that if others in the world today who basically are at the same level economically, industrially, as technologically advanced as we are, that you would look at those systems and say, if they're working here, perhaps they have some application in our society in North America.

And I would venture to guess, Mr. Speaker, and I may be proven wrong, that Canada's largest trading partner, which is the United States of America, at some point in time will go to a broadly based consumer type of tax system, because that would be the fairest way in that country, for instance, to integrate a medicare system in the United States.

They're finding as many problems with their system as what we have. They're finding a lot of people at the lower ends of the economic scales not having the wherewithal to fit into the medical and educational systems. If they are about to bring those people more fairly into society, they are going to have to have some means of a broadly based taxation system.

My guess is that the family tax credit, which the Minister of Finance is doing away with in this legislature, will make eminent sense in that jurisdiction, as it has in many other jurisdictions around the world, as it has been recommended by the Parliament of Canada by an all-party committee.

And it really makes me wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the minister in his reasoning and his thought in deharmonizing our taxes and taking away the child tax credit for all of those people below 24,500 is doing it for sound economic reasons or if he has got himself caught in a political conundrum that he doesn't quite know how to get out of.

And as my colleagues pointed out, Mr. Speaker, all through the debate on the previous Bill and again on this one, that many members of the New Democratic Party until very recently said that this was the proper way to go, that the two tax systems should be put together for simplicity, that the two tax systems should be put together because of their ability to tax all people in our society more fairly, and that they should be put together so that people on the lower end of the economic scales could have the family tax credit system.

And the member from Churchill Downs was recorded over and over and over again, Mr. Speaker, both in this legislature and in the media across this province, as recommending that. He said, we don't like the way the Tories do it; we would do it at a lower rate. Well that's fine, Mr. Speaker. If you can do it at a lower rate and be revenue neutral and come up with that income in some other way, fair ball.

But the principles involved in synchronization of those systems and the principles involved in the redistribution of wealth in our society were agreed wholeheartedly to by members of the New Democratic Party for over a two-year span.

And it was only in that brief period of time, Mr. Speaker, prior to the election when the thirst and the hunger for political power in this province grabbed a hold of the member from Riversdale, that we all of a sudden saw a shift in that political party. And that political party said, in order to achieve political power in this province, we are willing to gamble with the economic well-being of not only society in a whole because of the large deficit that would be created by deharmonizing, but they would be willing to play with the economic lives of those on the lower end of the economic scale, because along with that you had to cancel family tax credits, child tax credits. And, Mr. Speaker, I find that just a bit reprehensible, because this is a party that has stood over and over and over again and said that, we are for the people that are most disadvantaged in our society.

And yet, who will be hurt the most? Who, when they go out to a store in Regina tonight and they're buying toys for their children, will be hurt the most?

Because, as I said before, Mr. Speaker, that 7 per cent tax is there, whether it was there with the old E&H, or with the one that we will see come after this particular piece of legislation is passed by the governing majority. Those people will be paying that 7 per cent on that toy irregardless, but they will not have access to those child tax credits, Mr. Speaker.

My family can afford to pay that 7 per cent. Most of the people that I know can afford to pay that 7 per cent so that others can have those advantages.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would be really interested to hear members of the government stand in their place and tell us where the income will come to replace those tax credits for people on the lower end of the income scale, what changes will occur that will make sure that those people feel comfortable with the changes that are going to occur in the next few months, taxation-wise.

What are the moves that are going to happen so that people in our society know that income is being redistributed as fairly as possible? And it's always a situation, it seems, Mr. Speaker, in this session, where the New Democrats have the cart before the horse. They come in here and think nothing of changing the rules and regulations and precedents of this legislature in order to do what they wish. They come in here and they talk about changing the very constitutional rights of our citizens for

access to the courts, because it fits their political agenda even though their leader is known as someone who championed the Charter of Rights and Freedoms some 10 years ago.

And they now come in here and say, taxation-wise we are going to take money away from those who can least afford to give it up, and we are not going to tell those same people how we are either going to replace it or ensure that somewhere in the future their lot will be bettered in life.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, with that I will take my seat but say, and challenge the members of the government to stand in their places and tell members of this opposition how that will be done so that we may feel comfortable when their majority carries the day in this legislature on this particular Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1930)

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to discuss a little bit some of the same aspects, some other aspects of this Bill as it relates to the \$200 child tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out a number of things that really concern me as it relates to the kinds of things that this was intended to do, and now will be taken away from those people who have been receiving the \$200 tax credit.

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that when the federal government decided that they were going to run a tax on goods and services, they said that there is a need for individuals to receive some benefits that would not have accrued to them on the basis of the fact that they were paying for some of those goods and services, that the tax would be offset with a child tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, the child tax credit was provided as a result of discussion that related to an all-party committee in Ottawa. And the child tax credit came about as a part of that all-party committee talking about the things that needed to be done. Child tax credit is an interesting way of providing income to offset the purchases made by individuals who have low income and cannot afford, as well as the high income, the requirements that they need to live, the requirements that they need to exist on as a part of society.

Mr. Speaker, in dealing with this I thought about it as it related to a family of four, and it was particularly of interest to me on the basis that it applied to my sister's family. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I want to bring forward is the point that with her four children, she is receiving an \$800 child tax credit annually for the offset on the goods and services tax that she pays in relation to the . . . or due to the fact that she has a low income.

In this case, Mr. Speaker, the \$800 from the federal government is equivalent to that individual with four children buying \$11,400 worth of goods and services. Now, Mr. Speaker, on a normal basis, \$11,000 worth of purchases, of goods and services that were an increase in the volume, is far and above if you added it up and split off

where the goods and services taxes were increasing and what was in existence there, the individual who gets the child tax credit will in fact have a significant discretionary income on the basis of the fact that the child tax credit gives him the equivalent in buying of about \$11,500 because of that \$800 child tax credit, with a family of four.

Now one of the things that we wanted to do with harmonization is we wanted to blend that together so that not only would that individual receive a federal tax credit, that family would receive that provincial tax credit as well. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why we allowed that to happen. I want to point out as I did earlier . . . but in the context of this Bill that the member from Churchill Downs who stood over here, as I said earlier, and advocated that this was a good idea.

That, Mr. Speaker, is where the NDP (New Democratic Party) came from for a number of years. They said if you want to do anything, what you need to do is you to make it simple as you possibly can. And I agree with that. It came from the member from Churchill Downs. It had to be as cost-effective as possible in the collection and dealing with it from that perspective. All of those measures had to be a part of a reason why we should — as at that time we were the government — we should be considering and determining whether we should harmonize, blend our tax with the federal government.

And so, Mr. Speaker, as we work through the process together with the Department of Finance in Saskatchewan, together with the Department of Finance in Ottawa, it was brought more and more to our attention that it was the proper thing to do.

Now in dealing with where you provide an initiative to an individual family as it relates to the benefits that would accrue, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that based on . . . The size of the family is an important thing. I know that for years, the baby bonus has been paid on the basis of a child. I see where that is even at risk for going to this method of paying for the individual's families who have children, who have low incomes.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why I think that this should be a good process to follow. Family allowances have been in existence for a long, long time. And as I saw an article in the *Leader-Post* the other day, the family allowance focus is changing its emphasis to the fact that maybe a child tax credit is of more value than allowing a family allowance to go to a family that earns a 100 or \$200,000. And that, Mr. Speaker, is why the people in the federal government said this was not a bad idea of allowing that kind of child tax credit to be the function of providing a benefit to lower incomes. And that's why I would say that in our discussion here today and in my opinion, the view of the minister responsible for Social Services would have been a good view to have heard, on the basis of whether she thinks that this a good idea or a bad idea.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that in time, when the whole agenda comes to focus, that these people opposite that are now the government want to provide benefits to certain individual groups, are they going to use

this process? Or what are they going to do to develop the function of supplying some income for the lower income that would benefit these young men and women who have families who would be specifically benefitting from a child tax credit? And that, Mr. Speaker, is why I think it's an important part of why it should be included in the discussion.

I feel that time is going to show that they're likely going to get involved with this program. And I would suspect that down the road they're going to get involved with this type of a way of providing income assistance to low income people, based on child tax credits. And I think that that's an important thing to think about. I also think that they're going to do that sooner than later. And now they have destroyed the opportunity of getting it done. Twenty-four thousand people are going to get this benefit reduced in this next year.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, have they paid out for this last quarter, the amount that they were supposed to pay out? Have they already done that? Or are they going to hold that until this Bill is passed so that these people are not going to get the benefit that they should have had in the last quarter? That's a question I'm going to be asking in committee.

Is the opportunity for this 200 going to be made available in some other fashion in the new year? I believe that it should be. And I'm so glad that the member from Churchill Downs is listening to the observations that we make as I point them out to him. The kinds of discussion that he had from his position when we were in Committee of Finance dealt specifically with these issues. And I would challenge the member from Churchill Downs to get up and say what he said in this House earlier on. It's important for the rest of his colleagues — all 54 of them — to hear what he had to say in this Assembly not once, not twice, but many times.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that as he sits on the government side of the House anticipating promotion to not only the front bench but to a position in cabinet, that he would be interested in promoting an idea that would be a positive thing in Saskatchewan.

And I think that he should stand here and tell the people of this Assembly what he said as the critic for the Department of Finance earlier on this past year and before that. He said, harmonize — he said it over and over again — and then give a tax credit to the family that really is the lower income. Give that. And he said it. As a matter of fact, he was sitting right here, or standing right here, when he said that — or one bench over. And that's where the information came from, Mr. Speaker, and that's why I think they have turned themselves inside out based on a political promise that was not well thought out.

And I could just bring a comparison in here. It has something to do with the same kind of promise you made to freeze the mortgage repossession process by a moratorium. And you promised that during the election and now you're reneging on that.

But for \$200 a child on a tax credit, you're not prepared to stand here for defending the lower income families in this

province. You go around and say, I'm for the little guy — and here you are standing and saying, I'm not for the little guy. Why don't you become involved in the kinds of things that would give you a benefit to the . . . or give a benefit to the lower income people in this province? Why take it away from the children? That's the question. Why take it away from the children? I believe that you're doing it wrong. You're doing it absolutely, totally wrong. And that's why I think that each individual one of you should examine the motive in why you make this Bill as a part of the presentation that you're doing. Because you're taking away the opportunity for this family to have discretionary income again, which is exactly what you did in harmonization for all of the reasons that I discussed earlier.

Mr. Speaker, I think that that's wrong for the NDP government to be doing that. I don't think it's right. I don't think it's the right thing for them to do. Mr. Speaker, they've put themselves in a position where they had no alternative.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance could have paid for this if he would have left harmonization in place as it was before, blending the taxes together. If he wanted to have a lower rate, fine. But allow that to happen so that the individuals who are receiving the tax credit could still get the benefit.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to this Assembly that within a year my assessment of it will be this: that the NDP Party will have exactly this kind of a functioning process for providing incomes for lower income families in this way. And mark my words that when you do that I'll be here to tell you that you should have left it on in the first place.

That, Mr. Speaker, is why I'm challenging the members opposite not to do this. Two hundred dollars a family — and this I believe has been paid three times already this year. I believe that you need to think about that very seriously. It was paid in the second quarter; it was paid in the third quarter; and it was paid in the fourth quarter. Well we'll find out whether it's been paid in the fourth quarter when we come to Committee of the Whole or Committee of Finance, if we ever get there. That is what we're going to ask, Mr. Speaker, because we want to know how much of this has really been spent.

I suppose that one of the things that bothers me . . . Or there's a number of things that I want to say before I get to the things that bother me. One of the things is this, Mr. Speaker. The European Economic Community is touted by many people as being the engine that is driving international trade. It's driving international economic . . . it's the engine that drives things in Europe.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the members opposite that in Europe they have a value added tax that has significant impact in benefitting certain area. And I'll tell you something about it. And it deals with how we function as a part of society. In Europe they have a value added tax. Some commodities it's 10 per cent, some it's 20 per cent; in the fur business it's as high as 40 per cent. That's the tax on that value of that product.

And that, Mr. Speaker, flows into a general revenue that is

measured back out to society. And where does it go? It goes to a number of places. It goes to families, it goes to businesses, it goes to agriculture. And that is measured out in various proportions.

Just as an example, agriculture gets 10 per cent of all of those taxes received in Europe. And what has that done for the European Economic Community? It's taken it from a net importer of food products which they were from the 1930s and on, to now where it is a major exporter in the international trade.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is done by the way that they put together the tax on a value added basis. Now that, Mr. Speaker, is what functions to drive that economic engine in Europe.

I sat down in my room here earlier on this year, Mr. Speaker, and I was visiting with the ambassador from Austria. Austria is not a part of the Economic Community as of today. I asked him, I said: what's your concern with blending the taxes together so that you have these kinds of opportunities to deliver tax credits, to deliver benefits in rebates on various commodities. He said the people of Austria want it to happen.

(1945)

People of Austria want it to happen. Why? They were willingly . . . they voted in favour of putting it on. And that, Mr. Speaker, is why I say why not become involved in doing the same thing because I think it benefits the people of the province of Saskatchewan to get it done. In this case the \$200 a child tax credit is going to cause a lot of concern on the part of parents. And I believe that the individuals here would benefit by going to some of the rural families who are going to directly be impacted by this child tax credit being withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker, I was looking through the list of provinces that have the greatest amount of children in families who are in the poverty area, and Saskatchewan had 50,000 of them. And, Mr. Speaker, those 50,000 in my view would probably be, in some way, be able to be eligible for the child tax credit. Now those 50,000 aren't in downtown Regina. They aren't only in downtown Saskatoon or downtown Prince Albert. They're out in rural Saskatchewan, the reason being that rural Saskatchewan has had a low income.

Now what you're going to in effect do is take the child tax credit away from the majority of them . . . will be in rural Saskatchewan because the majority of the ones, as the member from Rosetown-Elrose said in a question period today . . . the seriousness of the agriculture plight is a part of the reason why these people need those dollars to have the benefit that would give them. And, Mr. Speaker, that's why I believe that this Bill should be defeated. I really do.

I don't know whether the members understand all of the implications of what this can do. But \$200 for every child in rural Saskatchewan is going to have a significant impact. It's going to have a significant impact for the low income in the cities too. And I'm not excluding them, but I want to point out to the people in this Assembly and to those that are listening that it's important for the people

who have children, who have low incomes, who are supporting them on very little.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I was responsible for the Department of Agriculture, and we had a small branch in there was called counselling and assistance for farmers. And when I visited with the counsellors that went around and talked to these people, they were struck at the variance in incomes that they allocated for their homes. But there were many people who had less than \$10,000 of discretionary income to provide for this function of providing food for their children. As a matter of fact, some of them had as low as 4 or \$5,000. They did not believe that a family could exist on that little.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is why this is important for those families. Those families need this money. A family of three is \$600, 600 from the federal government, 600 from the province. Do you think that isn't significant in a value of discretionary income of \$5,000? Mr. Speaker, it's 25 per cent of that family's income. And I don't think it's anything to just glibly pass over for this Assembly. I think it's an important part of what we have to think about.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be supporting this motion because I think you are going to be back in this Assembly with something very similar to that later on in the spring. And I believe that that is what you . . . You don't think you're going to, but I would challenge you to think of something different that would be better, because your counterparts in Ottawa agreed that this was one of the best ways to do it.

The division bells rang from 7:50 p.m. until 7:58 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 40

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Romanow | Koenker |
| Van Mulligen | Lorje |
| Wiens | Lautermilch |
| Simard | Calvert |
| Tchorzewski | Johnson |
| Teichrob | Trew |
| Koskie | Draper |
| Shillington | Serby |
| Anguish | Whitmore |
| Goulet | Flavel |
| Solomon | Scott |
| Kowalsky | McPherson |
| Carson | Crofford |
| Mitchell | Knezacek |
| MacKinnon | Harper |
| Penner | Keeping |
| Cunningham | Carlson |
| Upshall | Renaud |
| Hagel | Langford |
| Bradley | Jess |

Nays — 8

| | |
|----------|-------------|
| Muirhead | Martens |
| Neudorf | Britton |
| Swenson | Goohsen |
| Boyd | D'Autremont |

The Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

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

Mr. Whitmore: — May I have leave to introduce a guest?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Whitmore: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I would like to introduce a guest from my constituency this evening. Mr. Mitch Ozeroff who is sitting in the Speaker's gallery. Mr. Ozeroff is also a director of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, District 13. And we welcome him here this evening.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 11

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Carson that **Bill No. 11 — An Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act (No. 2)** be now read a second time.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With reference to Bill 11, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is basically the result of the processes of the previous government in trying to exercise restraint.

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that as a reeve, I had a good deal of problem accepting this proposition from the former government. And I want, Mr. Speaker, to go into that just a little bit further because I felt as a reeve at the time that this Bill was introduced, or a facsimile thereof last spring, that it placed municipalities in a rather difficult situation.

The problem being of course at that time that we had mostly drawn up our budgets for the year because that's done through the winter months. And when we got the information that this proposal was coming forth, it left some municipalities in rather a difficult position to be able to complete their year's work and still come out with a balanced budget.

Now fortunately for us in our municipality, we were not planning any very major road construction projects, so we were able to come through the year. And it does appear that we will have pretty close to a balanced budget. Unfortunately for some others, that wasn't the case.

But I guess being a reeve, I have to be prejudiced in that direction in that time period. And because I'm still an acting reeve, I still have to feel that same prejudiced feeling toward municipalities and the taxpayers back home who depend on municipal governments not being down-loaded upon. And this is a form of down-loading.

And having had the opportunity to find out that in retrospect and looking back that there was a problem in the country bigger than anybody had previously thought that there would be, it seems to me that the government of this particular time might have taken a look at this cut-back and said, well this is going to be an undue hardship for a lot of municipalities.

The recession is on in the countryside yet. The money is tighter than we had expected it to be in the farm sector. And maybe we should ease up on this one a little bit and not go ahead with it. And I think that would have been a reasonable consideration for the members in the government at this particular time because hindsight is better than foresight.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I will not accept this from this government. And I particularly will not accept it from this particular minister. Mr. Speaker, this minister should truly be embarrassed to bring forward a Bill to cut revenue sharing to rural municipalities by apparently 16 per cent. And she should be embarrassed, Mr. Speaker, because she promised the opposite. Her seat-mate, the Minister of Rural Development, promised the opposite.

The NDP visited many rural municipalities and RM (rural municipality) councils. And believe me, I know that they promised that revenue sharing would be increased and enhanced under an NDP government. And, Mr. Speaker, they said that they would not down-load onto the taxpayers of rural Saskatchewan and urban Saskatchewan. Reeves took you at your word, Madam Minister.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is not good enough for this minister now to say that the cupboard is bare because that argument just won't hold. It is not good enough because she was told that at the same time as I was told that as a reeve. And when we were told by the previous government that the cupboard was bare, the NDP members told us not to take that at face value.

They told us that it was only a matter of spending priorities. They told us that they would get the money by cutting back advertising and government travel and the size of cabinet. That's what they told us, and the media will remember that. And the Leader of the NDP said that these things, and the previous government said that it would never be enough. And they said, and I repeat, that it would never be enough and the NDP said they'd make up the difference by rearranging the priorities. They would make up the difference and there would be more money for rural municipalities and that is what we were told.

So don't now, Madam Minister, expect the reeves of this province to be like little children with a short memory span. You cannot now say that you were mistaken, that advertising and the size of the cabinet and the government travel isn't enough. We went around that loop with you, so don't expect us to let you get away with it now.

Speaking of government travel, Mr. Speaker, I wonder how much more money would be provided for in this Bill

if the government would not have used the first month of its term to see the world. Add up the cost and figure out how much more could have been put into this Bill. Perhaps only 10 per cent decrease instead of the 16 per cent decrease that is now appearing to be coming through in the process of this Bill. Just add it up.

The Leader of the NDP flew off to Ottawa with 100 people and so far has refused to release the details, so we don't know how much that particular trip cost and how much it could have contributed to this Bill to reduce the percentage that municipalities are going to be faced with having to make up.

The Minister of Finance flew to New York, and we still don't know how much that would have added to the RM budgets. But it was a cost and somehow the taxes will have to pay for those things that are shortfalls. And it'll all have to be made up somewhere.

The member from Elphinstone, he flew off to Ottawa and Montreal and he hasn't told us how much that could have put into the percentages in Bill No. 11. The member from Elphinstone has also told us he is sending a crew to the United States to talk about our clear skies. We have no information about the cost of that and the potential it would have for improving RM budgets, at least by a little bit. And I think in these very difficult times even a little would be important.

They've been flying here and there and everywhere at taxpayers' expense and the minister brings this Bill to the House and says: well, cutting government travel wasn't enough to keep our promises to the RMs for more money in revenue sharing.

Besides the travelling spree, Mr. Speaker, this government has already found money for an annualized salary of more than \$120,000 for Donald Gass to investigate whether or not there is any money. Think of that. It's downright silly. The man is getting \$10,000 each month to do the NDP's dirty work.

Here they present a Bill that says that we have to cut back the municipalities in the province. And that's not just going to be the rural municipalities, that's also going to be urban municipalities, so city folk ought to pay some attention to this as well. Their taxes are going to start to go up just the same as the taxes in the country when these kinds of bills are passed, because that kind of down-loading has only one affect--either you cut back services at the local government level or else . . . you cut back services or increase taxes, one or the other.

Do you think the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, believe that Donald Gass should be getting \$10,000 a month while the RMs provide services directly and get slashed back?

Now the government has found money to hire what secret memos have called investigators in the Property Management Corporation, but they can't find money for RMs.

The government has found enough money to bring back their old political friends like Garry Beatty, but they can't

find a dime for the municipalities.

They found several hundreds of thousands of dollars to employ the Premier's buddies from his law firm, so much so that the firm has had to change its name. Imagine that — they've hired so many of the Premier's law partners that the firm has had to change its name because none of the same people work there any more.

Money for the Premier's friends, but this Bill says nothing for municipalities. And this government, Mr. Speaker, has found a huge sum of money for committees and reviews. Ask the minister a question about any program or any policy, the answer always is, it's under review.

Well these reviews cost money, Mr. Speaker. And they are spending the resources of the taxpayers to keep all the little NDP workers busy and on salary. And then they say to the municipalities, there's no more money for you.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is unacceptable and because of this poor performance, this breaking of faith with the people of rural Saskatchewan, I will be asking the members to vote against this Bill.

The tax relief on property is important at this particular time, and we're not seeing tax relief to property owners through this Bill. We are seeing a down-loading of taxation from the province to rural and urban municipalities. Both SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) have had conventions where people have been asking for assistance so that they can get into some kind of a plan where they would reduce taxes on businesses and on farms and on ranches, and this down-loading becomes a big problem because now they can't do that.

And they're going to be forced not only to maintain taxation at its present level, but in all probability they will have to increase taxes to the very people that can afford to pay them the least at this particular time — cash strapped farmers, cash strapped ranchers and certainly recession-ridden urban business people. And I would encourage you all to reconsider this and vote against this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to on division, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 12

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Carson that **Bill No. 12 — An Act to amend The Assessment Management Agency Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, we have a few concerns with this Bill. It is cutting back the funding to SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) for a cut-back of 10 per cent, and we're wondering a few things about this Bill. But we're wondering if the government gave any thought to

consulting with those folks, and will it result in any lay-offs of any . . . or if there isn't going to be lay-offs, what else are they planning on cutting back?

Other than that, most of the concerns we'll prefer to raise them in committee then.

(2015)

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Speaker, having been involved with rural municipal work for some years, I happen to have been on municipal council and at various SARM conventions while the process went on for the funding and jurisdiction of SAMA to pass from government into the process that it's in now. And at that time, there was grave concern that there would be a down-loading of costs onto municipalities in this process.

We were assured, of course — as we always are at that time — we were assured that that wouldn't happen, that the government wouldn't do that to us. But of course, I could probably repeat the same arguments I used in the last question, and they would follow through fairly closely to the same situation that we're in here with this Bill with SAMA. We're finding that municipalities are being down-loaded on by the provincial government.

And there is absolutely no way that you can cancel the work of SAMA. It's absolutely essential that you have assessments done in the province, and it's an ongoing process. It always has been, and it always has to be because times and conditions change.

And the reality of life, Mr. Speaker, is that there is going to be an increasing in costs, and we tried to explain that at that time to the folks involved. We said that inflation is a factor of life that we don't see turning around. And granted it's not as fast now as it used to be, but it's still a factor. And that factor alone meant that eventually there's going to be more costs with the process of assessment than what we had before.

So what we said at that time and we repeat now, is that it was going to be costing more, and the government should take their responsibility. And instead of cutting the revenues to that particular program, they should be increasing at the rate that inflation eats up the availabilities of money to operate on.

And I say with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, that I think this government is going the wrong direction when they down-load taxes onto rural and urban municipalities at any time, but more especially during a recession and during a time when farmers and ranchers don't have any cash flow to speak of at all.

And I really and sincerely hope that you'll consider the direction that you seem to be setting when you pass these kinds of pieces of legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to on division, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 13

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Carson that **Bill No. 13 — An Act respecting Certain Payments to the Meewasin Valley Authority, the Wakamow Valley Authority and the Wascana Centre Authority** be now read a second time.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make a few comments on this particular Bill in regards to the Wakamow Valley Authority which, for the information of members that don't know what it is, it is a river park in the city of Moose Jaw very similar to what the Wascana Authority is here in the city of Regina, and the Meewasin Valley Authority is to Saskatoon. And there is a similar park, I believe, in the city of Swift Current and one being developed in the city of Weyburn.

The Wakamow Valley Authority was set up by an act of this legislature under the previous NDP government in the 1970s. It is very similar to the Wascana and Meewasin Authorities, except for one fact, that its statutory funding by the province of Saskatchewan was set at a level that was half of what the other ones were.

Wakamow, Mr. Speaker, has had a very proud history in its 10 years of existence. It has taken a river valley which had gone into a great state of disuse and misuse, a river park that at one time was famous in Moose Jaw's history, Mr. Speaker, and through a great deal of effort, primarily by volunteers, has turned that particular river valley into a tremendous asset for Moose Jaw and district. Along with the city of Moose Jaw and the senior level of government, there are also two RMs involved in it — the RM of Moose Jaw and the RM of Baildon. The RM of Baildon is the RM in which I reside, Mr. Speaker, and our rate payers have been proud to make a contribution to the Wakamow Valley Authority. And indeed there are a representative of the board from the two RMs, besides the city representatives, and citizens at large, and the provincial reps on the board of directors.

Wakamow is facing a very serious crisis in its history, Mr. Speaker, because it has been so utterly successful in its mandate. Wakamow has in its first 10 years achieved more than anyone ever would have expected. They've been very successful in raising funds financing over and above the statutory amounts granted to them by the various levels of government. Their private fund raising has touched people like the Devonian Trust. They have gone to many major corporations in order to take our river park and turn it back into a real jewel for Moose Jaw and area.

And because of that, because they have developed so many of their capital projects so successfully in a short period of time, they are really up against the crunch of operating capital today.

One of the things that has always bothered me is that because Wakamow is lumped in to the same bag, if you will, as places like Wascana, which being in the capital city and having many of the advantages that go with the seat of government, that Wakamow has come out on the short end of the stick.

We have a cairn at the entrance to our Wakamow park in

Moose Jaw with a list of donors on it. These are people in our community that have given a thousand dollars out of their pocket in order to ensure that Wakamow is gone ahead. And I don't think that any of the other urban parks around our province have had that kind of dedication, Mr. Speaker.

One of the ways that the previous government . . . Although they didn't change the statutory amount either and in fact were faced with some of the same difficult financial situations that the present government is, they very successfully were able to use other government programs to offset some of their operating needs.

And two that were very successful in the operation of Wakamow were Sask Works and the New Careers Corporation. We were able to use these two particular entities to do things like bank stabilization, to take people in our community that had been on social services for a great number of years and by employing them in Wakamow and development projects, these people were able to operate heavy equipment. They were able to learn skills such as surveying. They were able to learn carpentry skills. They were able to learn many skills that have benefitted not only our park, but our community as a whole, because almost all of those people that went through these programs while working on Wakamow have gone on to hold down permanent employment in other sectors.

And it really disturbs me, Mr. Speaker, that once again I see a situation of the cart before the horse. We have the Minister of Social Services canning the Saskatchewan Works program outright when it was one of the vehicles that Wakamow could use to continue on with their programs, to help people in the community, and make up for that lack of funding which was statutory by this legislature, and still be able to fulfil their mandate and their function. And the same goes with the New Careers Corporation. They've had a very successful relationship over the years where Wakamow was able to use these other entities of government to make up for the shortfall.

And we see Saskatchewan Works canned, its budget stripped and put into other areas. We don't know what the fate of the New Careers Corporation will be as yet, Mr. Speaker. Various ministers on the other side have varying opinions on it, whether it's moving or not moving, and whether it will grow or it will shrink. We simply don't know. But if entities like Wakamow, and Wakamow in particular, are stripped of their ability to use other entities of government in order to fulfil their mandate, it then comes back on the local citizenry, the city of Moose Jaw, the RMs involved, and the hundreds and thousands of hours of volunteer labour. Our Kiwanis club, our Kinsmen club, almost every service club in our city, fund-raises on a continuing basis to supply moneys to this venture which is really a part of our heritage and is truly something that we can all be proud of, and everyone in this province can be proud of.

So I would like some assurances, I think, Mr. Speaker, that other areas of government will not be denied to entities like Wakamow, entities that are built on the concept of volunteerism; that the drive which drives service clubs in our community to go out there and do that extra work, to

go out on the Saturdays and the Sundays and trim trees, and mow grass, and do lots of manual labour to make sure that our community continues to build on this jewel that we have in the river valley — and not, Mr. Speaker, see it disappear because we have taken the initiative and the will away from people.

And I think it's things like Wakamow that make people want to stay and live in our communities and in our province. I really do believe, sir, that in comparison to the two larger cities, that by showing this kind of effort, Wakamow deserves better in life than what they've been getting. It isn't very often that the city of Regina and the Wascana Authority ask for something and they don't receive.

And I can only think back, Mr. Speaker, to my time in government when the question of the MacKenzie Art Gallery came up and the pressures that came out of the capital city to have a world class art gallery, as included, because we have Wakamow and the legislative grounds, and we all know the pressures that come with those situations. And usually our two larger cities win out in almost every respect.

And this particular Bill — although it does freeze the statutory amounts at where they were in the previous year — because the other components have been stripped and taken away, means that Wakamow's ability to fulfil its mandate will be lessened.

And I don't think anyone in our city would say that these two particular programs, Saskatchewan Works and New Careers, have been a discredit to our city, to our province, and to the people that were employed working in our Wakamow Valley Authority. And I say the employment record from the people that went through those programs is ample evidence that those two programs work. And they work very good when they're tied to the community spirit and the volunteerism that people in our community have exhibited over the last 10 years.

And I would say to the government, please reconsider some of these moves because they impact on so many other areas of our society. And Wakamow is a classic example of something that is tremendously good and may not be able to continue its mandate without those tools, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

(2030)

Bill No. 18

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Simard that **Bill No. 18 — An Act to Provide for the Public Disclosure of Crown Employment Contracts, to Prescribe Provisions in Crown Employment Contracts governing Payments and Benefits in Termination or Expiration of those Contracts, to Void Provisions in those Contracts respecting those matters and to Extinguish any Right of Action and Right to Compensation for any Loss or Damage resulting from the Enactment or Application of this Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can't say it's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise in this House tonight to discuss this particular Bill.

What we have before us, Mr. Speaker, as was said yesterday, is a Bill unprecedented in its nature; a Bill which strikes at the very heart of what we as Canadians consider to be fairness; what we consider to be the individual rights which we have garnered over the years as we have moved through things such as the Diefenbaker bill of rights and into the repatriation of our constitution, Mr. Speaker, where the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was passed and brought back into our country some 10 years ago, a charter which the now Premier had a great deal of input in, in designing.

It was felt by many people across the land at that time, Mr. Speaker, that we had to change the ways in which we viewed our individual rights. And that we needed to enshrine those rights in some way that they would be above reproach. That those rights could not be arbitrarily taken away by the whim of politicians. That everyone would basically, Mr. Speaker, have their day in court.

And I think this particular Bill, which I believe to a great extent is politically motivated — and I will explain why I believe it is politically motivated, Mr. Speaker — that this Bill along with ones that we've seen of similar ilk where we've had the Minister of Finance come into this House and set aside all of the rules and precedents which have been developed here over a great number of years in order to do political work.

We have the same situation now, sir, with the rights of individuals; individuals who happen to be people that have worked in the public service, have worked for government. And, Mr. Speaker, these people had contracts, some of which may or may not be proper in the public mind. In other words, are they the proper amount of remuneration for the services given. But I believe, Mr. Speaker, the proper place to determine whether they were paid and severed properly is in the court of Canada, in the courts of our province.

And what I see before us is a Bill that uses the heavy-hand of this legislature to determine how people will have access to that system. I see a Bill that allows defamation. I see a Bill that allows mental anguish. I see a Bill that takes some of the things that people have fought and died for in two world wars taken away from them. Mr. Speaker, these people that we're talking about, and so far there are 50, 60 of them, Mr. Speaker, there could literally be hundreds of them.

I took the opportunity over the supper hour to glance through the government directory, the government phone directory. And I looked at the number of people that are out of scope that work for the Government of Saskatchewan. I wondered about the number of people that, for instance, are crop insurance agents around the province. The number of people that have contractual services with the Government of Saskatchewan.

And I look at this Bill which has no sunset clause in it, which says that this government, using their massive

majority, shoving a piece of legislation through this House, is going to deal with the contractual arrangements of people with their government in a way that is unprecedented in Canadian or Saskatchewan history.

And I'm wondering why it has to be this New Democratic Government of Saskatchewan that breaks these precedents. And I say to you, sir, that it is because I have never seen a more politically vindictive party anywhere in existence in Canada because there is no other reason, Mr. Speaker, for this particular piece of legislation to come forward.

Have we seen any indication that the people that are being referred to — each and every day in the press, by the way — people who are being let go, some of them with a lot of publicity and some with none at all . . . and I suggest to you, sir, that that is politically motivated.

I suggest to you that we are seeing these people talked about in a derogatory manner. And I would suggest to you, sir, that not one of them, not one of them has been negotiated with. Not one of them has been given the opportunity to sit down with the government and say, I would like to settle my contractual problem which you the government have identified in a reasonable manner.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, that in the Department of Justice there are reasonable and fair-minded people because they settle labour disputes, they settle contractual disputes in this province almost on a monthly basis. It is a Canadian tradition, Mr. Speaker, to negotiate, not to come into the Legislative Assembly and use the heavy hand of the majority.

It is almost a tradition, Mr. Speaker, that a last step in any dispute is to call the Parliament of Canada or a legislature together and vote to put people back to work. It is something that we avoid at all costs in this country — to use the heavy hand of the legislative process to interfere with the bargaining rights of people.

And yet I say to you sir, unless this government has some evidence otherwise, that not one of these people have been negotiated with. And the reason that they have not, sir, the reason that they have not, is because this government has a political agenda driven by some of the members of the New Democratic Party that they wish to satisfy. And they are out to trample on the rights of individuals by using this Assembly and the overwhelming majority they hold in it to do that.

Mr. Speaker, a number of these people, if their name were raised in the newspapers of this province, probably would not be recognized by more than a handful of people. Many of these people came to this province and entered into contractual arrangements because they saw, one, opportunities for themselves and their family. They saw opportunities in their field of endeavour to come here and build a better society. They saw opportunities to use what they have learned in university and in the private sector to come here and build and create and do new things. And, sir, those people entered into contractual arrangements.

And now we have the situation. We have several dozen at

present. We potentially could have several hundred, Mr. Speaker, in the same position, perhaps people that have at some point in their lives run afoul of someone in the New Democratic Party, someone who has a politically vindictive nature.

And now we have this Premier who, as the attorney general of this province, saw fit to work through the night in Ottawa some 10 years ago — work through the night in order to come to an arrangement that would guarantee the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for Canadian citizens — now, in one of his first acts as Premier, bring in a piece of legislation that in fact does just the opposite.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is utterly reprehensible. This man knows the negotiating process that we as Canadians value and hold dear. This man knows as the attorney general, a former attorney general of this province, the reluctance to bring this legislature together to impose a settlement on people, and yet would use his huge majority to come in and basically, because I can see no other reason, Mr. Speaker, except to seek some type of political retribution being pushed upon him by members of his party.

Because, Mr. Speaker, I think everyone, given the attention that this item has drawn, realizes that there will be court action.

Now the minister said in introducing the Bill that they are going to save 2 to \$3 million by introducing this piece of legislation. Well, Mr. Speaker, we all know the costs of lawyers and litigation today in Canadian society.

And I will wager with the Premier that before this thing is said and done that there will be tens of thousands of dollars spent on litigation. And some of these people that we're talking about, Mr. Speaker — some of these people that this Bill is intended to fix — some of these people are not particularly wealthy people. They're upper middle income earners. And I'm not so sure, Mr. Speaker, that some of these people will have the wherewithal to hire the best lawyers in the land; that some of these people will not have the wherewithal to go to the Supreme Court of Canada to challenge this particular piece of legislation brought in by this Premier and this government.

So in the end, Mr. Speaker, the will of the majority in this Assembly will probably use its heavy hand on those individuals because they will say yes, my rights have been trod upon but I don't have the financial wherewithal to protect my rights because the Premier and his government have access to the public purse. They have access to the taxpayer of Saskatchewan to do their work. They can bring their heavy-handed legislation in and then they can pick from the pockets of every person in this legislature, from the pockets of every one of my constituents, the wherewithal to fight in court any litigation brought forward by any of these individuals. And you can say, Mr. Speaker, in this country that we're all equal under the law, but unfortunately that sometimes isn't totally true because we know that the ability to pay many times affects the ultimate outcome of a litigated process in this country.

So we not only have the heavy hand of the majority in this

legislature. We will have the heavy hand of government dipping into each and every one of our pockets to fight the court battles that will ensue out of this particular legislation and they will use that to take away those rights.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not standing here in this legislature tonight in defending the case that the government trotted out in their early days, in a day or two before the New Democratic Party convention. Now I'm not saying that was done on purpose, Mr. Speaker, it perhaps was a coincidence. But the very fact that that individual's case was thrown out as a *raison d'être*, the *raison d'être* that we must change how things are done in this province when all of the rest, Mr. Speaker, are nowhere close — and the members of the government know that. Many of those contractual arrangements are at present very similar to what you would find in the private sector.

And I know the Attorney General says we are simply wanting to use the common law of the country to set these standards; that we want to divide the way in which public servants garner their severance; what we aren't going to allow them to sort of bank income as part of their agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I didn't design those particular contracts. Most of them I know nothing about. But I do know many of the individuals involved and I can tell you that most of these individuals are very competent people. They are the kind of people that have worked very hard for their province. They are the kind of people that can put deals together that both the former government . . . that both the former government and the present one can live with.

So, Mr. Speaker, there never has been a question of competence — that these people did not do a good job where they were employed, that they did not garner for Saskatchewan taxpayers good results. But these people in most cases have been judged to be politically incompatible with the new administration.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, all across Canada for a long, long time that when governments change, people change; that people in government like to have people of the same philosophical bent close to them doing their business.

(2045)

It's an issue that is much in dispute today, Mr. Speaker, in our country. It is an issue that the Reform Party of Canada talk about a lot. It is an issue that people of all political stripes talk about a lot. As we go into this next century, perhaps we as Canadians should be thinking about doing things differently in that regard so that we don't have the situation occur; when we have a transition of government, we have these problems occurring with people being fired because of their political affiliation.

But, Mr. Speaker, these people by and large have been fired without cause, which means no one takes issue with their job. And at the same time, we are now going to have this legislature ask to pass a Bill that will negate those contractual obligations entered into by the government — in many cases, I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker,

entered into under very well-meaning terms. And these people are not being given the opportunity to use binding arbitration as we would expect. . .

The Speaker: — Order. The noise in the legislature is much, much too high. If members have something that they wish to discuss that takes fairly high volume, I would ask the members to excuse themselves from the Assembly so we can carry on with the public business.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I noticed in this particular Bill that people that belong to a collective bargaining unit have been excluded from any parts of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, binding arbitration has been a fact of life when dealing with people under collective bargaining contracts in our country. It has been ordered by courts. It has been ordered by legislatures. At no point did this government even make the offer of an independent panel, commission, tribunal, which could use binding arbitration to settle these matters without the heavy hand of this legislature.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have had no negotiating process, which is a fundamental part of our history. We haven't had the opportunity to use binding arbitration. What we are faced with is a legislative Act that denies the basic rights of individuals to recourse in the courts.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've heard members opposite say that is not right, that right is in there. And yet members of the official opposition have sought opinions; I know members of the Liberal Party have sought opinions; and, Mr. Speaker, those opinions are many and varied.

And that tells me, Mr. Speaker, that because those opinions are many and varied and they come from across Canada, that means that there is some doubt in the minds of individuals that understand and know our constitutional process as to whether this is right or wrong. That tells me, Mr. Speaker, that this situation will end up in the courts of Canada. And it will put significant financial pressures on people who might not have the ability to pay those pressures.

And that brings me back to an earlier point, Mr. Speaker. If you don't want to use the negotiating process, if you don't want to use some type of third party binding arbitration, and you want to use the heavy hand, then there is only one reason, Mr. Speaker, to use it, and that is purely political. There can be possibly no other reason why you would wish to attempt to solve the problem through this legislature other than a political solution.

Mr. Speaker, I am now going to move a motion . . . No? Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 18 . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I received a piece of advice from one of my colleagues and we got mixed up on the interpretation.

The official opposition will be presenting amendments to this particular Bill during Committee of the Whole. They are amendments, Mr. Speaker, that have been researched with some diligence. They are amendments that have sought outside legal opinion. And I hope that when we get into committee that the Minister of Justice gives these

amendments their due consideration. Because obviously the fact that people felt confident about drafting the amendment — people from the legal community — means that there is some argument as to the validity of the Bill that's brought forward.

I think yesterday, Mr. Speaker, when members opposite were initially discussing this particular piece of legislation, they brought forward a proposition to this House that makes a great deal of sense to me, and in people that I've talked to across the piece makes a great deal of sense to them.

The official opposition proposed to this House that there be a referral to the Court of Appeal for an opinion on the constitutional validity of this particular Bill pursuant to the provisions of the constitutional questions asked. I know it is a provision, Mr. Speaker, that was used in this House previously. I can remember one instance where the former attorney general, the former member from Lumsden, asked for a referral on a particular matter. The then members of the opposition had no problem with that particular referral. I think it was a matter of substance.

And I would think, Mr. Speaker, if the government were so absolutely sure, so absolutely sure on their direction and the advice that they have been given, obviously from legal counsel both probably in and out of government, that they would not fear this reference. Because while this reference is taking place, the opportunity to negotiate is very much alive. The opportunity to sit down and come to some kind of amicable agreement with some of these people would occur. Because they are fair- and reasonable-minded people, I would suggest, in most cases, Mr. Speaker. They are as fair as any bargaining unit which occurs in this country, which goes into a negotiation at here and ends up with a settlement with management somewhere down here in the middle.

And while this reference was being sought — and it may take, I admit, Mr. Speaker, a couple of months — it would allow the negotiating process to take place that people would come to agreements; that the government would be saved litigation costs; the taxpayer, each and every one of us who will be asked to help pay those litigation costs, would not have to; and that perhaps 90 per cent of the problem, Mr. Speaker, if this government is true and honest in what they're saying as their objective, that 90 per cent of the problem that these people have identified could perhaps be rectified by the time that this particular reference is brought back.

And if the government has done its homework, Mr. Speaker, then their particular piece of legislation will be upheld. And then I would think, Mr. Speaker, that this Legislative Assembly would have no choice but to say that particular piece of legislation has passed all the hurdles, it is right and proper, and yes, government, we will stand aside and let it go through.

But, Mr. Speaker, when that particular amendment was proposed to this large, huge NDP majority, they said, no, we will use the power of our majority and we will ram it down the throats of whoever it may affect in the province of Saskatchewan. We are not worried about the Court of Appeal or the highest court in the land. We will simply do

it and we will ram it down your throat. And, Mr. Speaker, this from the member from Riversdale who had a integral part in bringing back the Constitution of Canada from Great Britain, who sat up through the night to get the work done.

Now, Mr. Speaker, given what I have said, if the decision of this government is not to allow that process to take place, if the decision of the government is that we will deal with all of these individuals with the heaviest hand possible, then one has to come back to the beginning premise, Mr. Speaker, and it is that this whole exercise is motivated strictly by politics — that this whole exercise is motivated by the desire of people within the New Democratic Party for some type of political revenge to people who worked for the previous administration. And, Mr. Speaker, this from a Premier and a government who have said, we are going to be different; we are going to be fair; we are going to be non-partisan; we are going to set the new precedents that government in Canada will look up to.

But sadly, sadly, Mr. Speaker, the evidence before us of this new government is entirely different. As I have said many times before in this legislature, what I've seen before me are closed doors. I have seen the Gass tribunal operating behind closed doors so that people in our society don't know whether its deliberations are fair. I have seen the Minister of Finance walk into this legislature and say that, I will set aside the rules of this legislature to do my bidding on a supply motion.

So, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, despite the public pronouncements of the member from Riversdale, despite his run up to the premiership of this province, and all the things that he told the people about being new and different and non-partisan, the evidence . . . And, Mr. Speaker, I am not unlike many people in our society who, when they see the weight of evidence before them, can only come to the conclusion that members of the opposition have come to on this particular piece of legislation — and that is that it is politically motivated. Because otherwise, Mr. Speaker, why would a new government want to enter into such a heavy-handed transaction?

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that when we get into debate of this Bill in committee, there are going to be many questions asked. There are going to be many areas that need to be clarified. We have to know at a very early date how far this Premier, this Minister of Justice, and this large government — how far are they going to go in this process of denying the rights of people in our society.

How far through government is the broad brush of the New Democratic Party going to sweep? Who are the people on the list that this legislation is going to affect? Because there is no sunset clause, Mr. Speaker, simply to deal with the 57. One only has to assume that there are other people that they've got in mind. One only has to assume, Mr. Speaker, in looking at this Bill, that that broad sweep of the brush is intended to cut through many areas of government.

And I want to know, Mr. Speaker, and the people in my constituency want to know, because there are people out

there that work for government. The moms and dads of people that work for government live there. The people that have relatives and people might aspire to work for government live in the constituency of Thunder Creek. And I'm sure they're going to want to know how far this legislation is going to go. How long is it going to last? And who is it going to aim at?

(2100)

Because, Mr. Speaker, we as a province continually need good, educated, far-sighted people to survive. We are a province that exports to live by. We are a province that must manufacture and value add if we are to prosper. And, Mr. Speaker, to achieve those ends you have to have good, talented people who are willing to come to this province and build their careers, bring their families here, and set their sights on the future.

And if this legislation that we have before us, Mr. Speaker, says to those people, I dare not take the challenge of coming to this province, or I dare not take the challenge of staying in this province and raising my family because I fear that I might offend someone in the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker, we will not grow and prosper. We will not attract the kind of people that we need to build this province. We will not have the ability to go into the investment community of the world and say to them, we are a good and stable and fair jurisdiction for you to come and invest in, because the principle of retroactivity has been established.

And, Mr. Speaker, we had a taste of that in the 1970s. We had a taste of that in the nationalization legislation piloted through this legislature by the member from Riversdale. And we saw people come to this province and make investments of hundreds of millions of dollars and retroactively have that investment taken away.

We saw this government, the previous NDP government, say that, we will take a 50 per cent share in every uranium mine discovered in this province because that is our right; and it is retroactive, and you have no recourse under the law.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've heard for years the member from Riversdale and other members of the governing party say, we aren't like that any more. We've changed, we've grown up. The world has changed. We're in a global economy. We no longer believe in nationalization. We're a kinder, gentler party. But it doesn't look that way, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't look that way.

It doesn't look that way because at its first opportunity it introduces a piece of legislation which harkens back to those days in the 1970s when that government was so bent upon taking from people who had made investments in our province and say, we don't want you here any more.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this piece of legislation says to individuals — individuals in Saskatchewan, individuals in Canada, individuals around the world, who would come and use their expertise to build this province — that no, that is not the kind of place I want to

be because this government can step in and use its big majority in this legislature to take away my constitutional rights as an individual and a citizen.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, from the phone calls that I have been getting, and members of my caucus have been getting, and the people in my constituency have been getting, says that many people feel that in their heart, Mr. Speaker. That people that have looked beyond the narrow political agenda which the government has trotted out for us with the former president of SaskPower, when people look beyond that narrow political agenda they see that this legislation is onerous; that this legislation has the ability to attack the individual such as none as we have ever seen in this province before.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it is absolutely incumbent that members of the government — this Premier who took part in repatriating our Constitution — but also this Premier that did pilot through the nationalization process back in the '70s, that this Premier stand in this Assembly and define for people who this legislation is going to impact on, how long it is going to last. When will it stop, or will it go each and every day that the member from Riversdale is Premier of this province? Will it go on and on and on, until he has satisfied the political whims of his party? Will it go on and on and on, until this need for political retribution by members of the New Democratic Party have been satisfied?

Those are the things that we in the opposition need to know, Mr. Speaker. Those are things that people in our society need to know. And if they are not willing to say when it end, who it will affect, then we can only surmise, Mr. Speaker, that the heavy hand will continue to operate and chop its way through the Government of Saskatchewan and our society.

Mr. Speaker, I never dreamt that one of the very first pieces of legislation that this government would introduce — after having listened to the member from Riversdale in this House for the last five years, and from the time leading up to the last election campaign — would be to come in here and strip away the human rights of people in our society. This member, this Premier, has been on record time *ad infinitum*, Mr. Speaker, as saying his party and his administration would never be like that.

And, Mr. Speaker, I say to the people of Saskatchewan tonight, there is an obvious contradiction at work in this Assembly, an obvious contradiction at work. And one can look at newspaper articles, and remember the TV, and know that that contradiction is at work. And I think, Mr. Speaker, until the members of this opposition and the people that we represent have been satisfied that there is no contradiction, that the rights of individuals in our society will be upheld to the fullest, that people will have recourse in the courts of our land, will we rest on this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel a tremendous responsibility today as I speak about this legislation. And I feel strongly that I represent the middle ground, that I am the only one who can speak with

credibility from this side of the House because the re-elected members of the official opposition must shoulder the blame for the very introduction of this legislation.

If there were any Bill to be introduced at all, Mr. Speaker, it should be a Bill about fairness and justice. After all, half of the people of this province made a decision to elect 55 individuals from the New Democratic Party in order to restore some semblance of decency to Saskatchewan.

Yes, 55 individuals, Mr. Speaker, 55 people with minds of their own; 55 people who carry the trust of the voters in their constituency that they will do the right thing for Saskatchewan, for all of its people, 55 supposedly free-thinking individuals who are charged with the responsibility of seeing justice done.

We have but to watch with open eyes to see that this is not a fair and just world, Mr. Speaker. But it is the role of government to make it more fair and more just.

That is what disturbs me most about this legislation. The Bill presented before this House by the province's Minister of Justice brings to Saskatchewan legislation that will bring a form of justice for some people but not for others. And this is hardly fair or just.

In the past election, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province voted against a government which blatantly abused its power and the spending of our tax dollars. It's no secret that the Conservative government did hire its friends and paid outlandish severance packages. And the Conservative government had not thumbed its nose at the civil service by creating special positions, special contracts and outrageous severance packages in those contracts for its pals, this NDP government would never be able to introduce such equally extreme and outrageous legislation that is before us today.

There is no doubt in my mind that there are dozens of contracts which should be cancelled because they're ludicrous wastes of taxpayers' dollars, Mr. Speaker. I've called for an end to the misuse of tax dollars for some time. And although I agree that serious measures must be implemented to terminate unreasonable agreements, I argue that there must be a far more non-partisan approach to what is considered reasonable by fair market standards in the civil services of other provinces and in the private sector.

To that end, I have called upon the government to follow through on its own resolution of a few years ago: to appoint an independent committee to review all appointments in question, one by one, and to recommend what is fair and reasonable.

Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat disillusioning that there are members of this House that are going to be voting on this legislation, and they are choosing to so frivolously listen to anyone's comments. I am very disturbed to see that the NDP government has not taken an open and fair approach to this. Rather it has used obvious examples of patronage and gross abuses of tax dollars to justify the introduction of this broad-ranging legislation which can end careers, terminate legal contracts, and not allow

individuals who were legitimate members of our professional civil service any recourse whatsoever.

The NDP knows full well that a labourer cannot be fired without just cause, or the individual can turn to the Labour Standards Board for assistance. Unions fight tooth and nail to ensure that their employees' contracts are honoured. Who is to defend the legitimate members of our civil service from this legislation such as this, Mr. Speaker? The responsibility that I feel here today is to provide a credible argument on behalf of those citizens in our province who will find themselves at the mercy of this legislation and this government, as well as speaking to the people of our province who are being led to believe by this government that all civil servants are just like the privileged previous head of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation.

This is absolutely and undeniably ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. Many of these individuals have been long-time employees of the professional civil service. Most are people with specialized education, training and experience, who have devoted their careers in whole or in part to the betterment of Saskatchewan.

Most are people who have worked under more than one government administration, who have kept their politics to themselves for fear of recrimination by whatever government is in power at the time. Many are people who have moved their families to Saskatchewan, purchased homes here, and have become parts of our communities.

And now they're at the mercy of a government which wishes to purge itself of Conservative patronage, and is willing to adopt a take-all mentality so as to not miss anyone hidden beneath the layers of bureaucracy. And for that I say shame.

This government, Mr. Speaker, is the same group of people who were horrified at the idea of government employees being uprooted from their jobs with no choice during the recent Fair Share scare in the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union). Look at what it will do to families, they said. What will people who are wanting to do business in Saskatchewan government think, they asked. What utter hypocrisy that they could ask those questions of one group of people and be disinterested in another.

And now look at what this New Democratic government is empowering itself to do to the lives and families of another group of people, top line civil servants. The government has made our professional civil servants into sitting ducks because they are top end wage earners in a struggling economy. If the issue is salaries, or severances, or separation pay, Mr. Speaker, then let us collectively decide what is fair and competitive in the job market for people of this calibre and make some adjustments. If the issue is patronage, Mr. Speaker, let us develop a far more precise instrument, more focused legislation to deal with this issue. And let us implement legislation such as this apologetically, with the understanding that it is directed at specific abuses of tax dollars and is not designed to authorize big brother behaviour.

(2115)

Mr. Speaker, when legislation is used to alter the terms of existing contracts it must only be done in extreme circumstances. We must think of what message this sends beyond our borders. In essence it says Saskatchewan wants you to do business with us, but well, come on in anyway, sign a deal, and then let's hope that Saskatchewan doesn't change governments, or that the government of the day doesn't change its mind.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice is telling people that we can just tear up contracts, tear up agreements, and send you home empty-handed. What more valuable precedent could this government use to prove a point than its people.

No private employer could get away with this, sir. Why should government? Not only is this Act uncaring on the part of government, it is completely inconsistent with what is expected of any other sector that employs people. In actual fact a business person could fire a bartender and be obligated to provide more notice and more severance under The Labour Standards Act than this legislation provides for our civil servants.

It puts this government on a level which is above the law. Outside of regular contractual obligations on the part of the employer, this Act supersedes The Labour Standards Act. The message that this sends to people, not only to those prospective employees of the government or those entering a contract with this province for the delivery of goods and services, the message, Mr. Speaker, is that the government of this province can squirm out of its obligations by passing laws in this House to suit its own agenda.

Mr. Speaker, this Assembly is charged with creating legislation which should serve as a model for the people. And I am truly saddened by the model that they are setting for employers who consider employees to be without rights. No private employer could or should get away with this. Why should government?

This NDP government feels that it has a point to prove. And who does the NDP government use to prove a point to the former government? It uses people. This is a government which sells itself on how much it cares about people. But which people does it really care about? Every individual? Does every person count in Saskatchewan or only those who are politically expedient to care about?

Surely there is another way to approach this without ploughing the crop under to kill a few weeds. And that is what this Bill does, Mr. Speaker. It effectively takes the heart and the motivation out of the civil service of Saskatchewan just to clean up a few rotten apples.

I'm not here to argue which of the appointments were political, or which settlements were too rich, or which were acceptable. The fact is, not even the Premier knows how many contracts are out there which will be covered by this legislation. I could support a motion which called for the filing of contracts so that an independent board could review them. I support the public scrutiny of contracts. I said before that all three parties and a representative body from the private sector should

appoint members to a panel to review all contracts.

What I take issue with in this Bill is the government's broad brush approach to the people in our civil service. I refer to section 3, paragraph 2, subsection A on page 3 of the Bill and I shan't read it, Mr. Speaker.

What this says, in effect, is that those people already protected by their unions have nothing to fear from this legislation, but those individuals who are not part of a union — individuals who do work at the top so to speak for government — are being told that a deal is a deal with a union employee but not with you. They are basically being told, Mr. Speaker, that their rights under the Charter do not apply in Saskatchewan because they have no right of reproach.

Is that what you really want this Bill to say? How can the members opposite be proud of this? Have those of you who will no doubt follow the party line like sheep as you always do stopped to consider this and what it will mean to any person or corporation planning to do business with our government?

Well let me tell you what it means for those of you who probably won't bother to read the Bill before you vote on it. It means that people will be suspicious of Saskatchewan contracts. They will fear that some other legislation like this will rear its ugly head and cancel their deals mid-stream. And it will mean that people will start building money into their tenders, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that they get their costs up front because they'll always wonder about the trustworthiness of this NDP government, question the validity of their contractual agreements.

But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, people are going to think twice before coming to this province. People with talent will think more than twice before coming to this province, and before staying in this province. Many of our top-quality civil servants, those who have not already fled the persecution of the Conservatives, will have little reason to stay when their contracts become virtually worthless.

What needs to be introduced here is watch-dog legislation that scrutinizes deals before they are signed, and recommends them or sends them for re-negotiation if they're outside the guide-lines established by an independent board. There is a big difference between re-negotiation of contracts and unilateral revocation of contracts through legislation. A big difference, Mr. Speaker, between re-working a deal because circumstances have changed and expropriation without compensation.

This government is offering no assurance to the people who live in this province, or the people who sign deals with Saskatchewan, that we will honour its contracts or respect its agreements in the future.

I think it is most unfortunate that we have in official opposition a group of individuals, the re-elected members who are unable to stand and really express legitimate concerns about this Bill, because to many people in the province they lack credibility. And why is

that, Mr. Speaker? It's because it was the previous government — to my right — who destroyed the people's trust in government, and who, as a result, now lack credibility.

This is a group of individuals representative of a much larger group who took the power of government to the other extreme. They negotiated contracts, some of which were deceitful, designed to make party faithful rich for years to come. But just as we cannot assume that everyone who did business with the previous government got rich, nor can we assume that every civil servant deserves to be punished at the hands of this Bill.

When the official opposition has no credibility, often the government not only wins the vote, they not only win the vote, but wins the public support on the issue by default. And, Mr. Speaker, this is one issue where the people must try to remain objective despite their bitterness towards the abuses that characterized the last nine years. To throw out one government which had lost respect for the laws and the statutes of this province, that did whatever it felt necessary to accomplish its own political goals; to throw out a government like that, Mr. Speaker, should not give its replacement a mandate to embark on the same course.

I conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by appealing to all of the new members of this Assembly. We were sent here as individuals, real people with real feelings, with a capacity to think for ourselves and make decisions based on full knowledge. We were not sent here to simply be yes-men and yes-women for our respective political parties.

But I have watched as government members in this House simply vote with their party because they were tutored on their government's point of view. They vote without even having listened to members' points. They vote after having spent their time heckling and jeering rather than being thoughtful and considerate — vote, in fact, without even being present for debate.

Mr. Speaker, there are none so blind as those who will not see. I say to all new members through you, Mr. Speaker, that you cannot care about some people and not others. You cannot have justice for some and not for others. Is there one government member with enough courage, individual fortitude, and commitment to human rights to vote against Bill 18? I truly hope so, Mr. Speaker, but I doubt it.

I am politically and ethically opposed to this proposed legislation. Further, on a personal level, I feel that there could be a perceived conflict of interest in my voting upon this motion.

Therefore I hereby end on a point of order pursuant to Rule 37 that I will be withdrawing from the vote.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what we're discussing here today is a Bill that, when passed, will allow the government to change employment contracts that it finds unacceptable. What we have here today is a Bill which will allow the government to change the law. What we have here is a government who is omnipotent, or at the very least has

the illusions of being all-powerful.

First they change the laws of the legislature. And now we have them changing the laws of the land or attempting to. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the members across the way share with the member from Regina Albert South's opinion that the individual is not as important as the system.

And that is why we have them today debating a Bill that will use this legislature to target individual citizens. That is why we have them using the powers of the legislation to conduct a witch-hunt.

If what they are proposing with this legislation is right, Mr. Speaker, they would extend it to include private sector contracts. But we don't see them doing that, Mr. Speaker. And a question I ask is, why? I would like to ask them why but, Mr. Speaker, they have also stripped me of the opportunity to ask questions other than in question period.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill goes far beyond reducing severance packages, as the NDP would have the public believe. This Bill, Mr. Speaker, suspends fundamental principles of law. I do not and I cannot believe that the Minister of Justice truly approves of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I know that member well enough to know that he's an honourable person. And I do not believe that he wants to be known for ever after in the law schools as the individual who introduced this law, the individual who set a precedent of this calibre. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure he does not want our future lawyers to examine and study a law that hangs individuals out to dry and strips them of their rightful severance.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that our Justice officials agree with what this Bill encompasses. This Bill does not require that all Crown employment contracts be made public. It does nothing of the sort, Mr. Speaker. What this Bill does is provides a method for the NDP to make public only contracts of the previous government. What this Bill does is provides the NDP a method in which to maintain a cloak of secrecy around all future employment arrangements. What this Bill does is legalize slander, libel and persecution. And in so far as civil remedies are concerned, Mr. Speaker, this Bill creates a clever environment exempting the NDP from all scrutiny.

And I know that members over there are catcalling, Mr. Speaker, and I don't believe they've read the Bill. I don't think they understand it. They don't believe. Mr. Speaker, we have had legal advice from, I think, legal people just as qualified as the member that keeps chirping at me, Mr. Speaker. He was never able to make his living as a lawyer; he had to get into government. And he chirps . . .

(2130)

The Speaker: — Order, order. We are not to get into the personalized and personal vendettas against members of this Assembly, and I ask the member to get back on the principle of the Bill.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for

the . . . for correcting me there. As I said, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that the authorities that we are using are any less capable than those who seem to be disagreeing with me tonight, Mr. Speaker. This Bill, as I said before, creates an environment which allows the NDP to hide from scrutiny, including, Mr. Speaker, scrutiny of severance payments, by limiting the effect of the Bill to those agencies with boards of directors appointed 90 per cent by the cabinet.

Just as the Minister of Finance's Bill suspends constitutional guarantees of the legislature, and the rules and procedures of the Assembly itself, so does this Bill suspend . . . so does Bill 18 suspend the application of law for an narrowly defined group of individuals. This government is arbitrarily changing rules and laws at their leisure. They are abusing their majority in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, to an extent that I don't think we have saw before, not in the short time I've been here.

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion they are caught up in revenge. It's pent up anger of having had to wait for 10 years to gain control of this province. And they are persecuting innocents with no political affiliations, Mr. Speaker. The question we have to ask is: how soon will the thirst for blood be quenched — the thirst for blue blood, Mr. Speaker?

I cannot believe there is any other reason for this Bill than get even — get even, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government so wants to defame the Conservatives that they have lost sight of where they are and what they should be doing.

And why, Mr. Speaker, are they here? I don't believe they were elected to hunt . . . to go on a witch-hunt and destroy a few Tories out there, Mr. Speaker. They were elected to govern this province. They are not here, Mr. Speaker, to condemn a party who you feel has cheated you out of power. They are here to govern a province.

Mr. Speaker, the members across the floor are not even considering what is good for the province. They are too busy hunting down wherever they perceive as Tory loyalists — spill some more blue blood.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the question: do you think you gain votes by firing civil servants and denying their severance pay? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. I don't think they were elected to do that. As the Leader of the Liberal Party just said a few moments ago, Mr. Speaker, we have people of all political persuasions as civil servants. You and I and all the members here worked with them, and we found them honourable. We found them professional enough to rise above their political beliefs and do the job properly.

I also agree with the Leader of the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker, that there are only a few in comparison that are capable of taking on the job as civil servants and doing it properly, and they should be paid and well paid. And I'm not here, Mr. Speaker, to argue the numbers involved here.

I agree with our member from Thunder Creek. If there is to be negotiations and some of those severances do not appear to be reasonable, then let's negotiate with those

people. I don't think, Mr. Speaker, you can take one or two packages and condemn a whole civil service, four or five hundred people, because one or two were able to negotiate a severance package that would seem to be exorbitant. I don't believe that. I don't think that's what this was put there for, Mr. Speaker. I don't think that's what we're after here. I think we're after Tory blood at any cost.

Mr. Speaker, a question I would ask: why doesn't this government put their energies to good use? Why doesn't the government have their various departments devise constructive legislation rather than destructive legislation? Why are we standing here tonight, Mr. Speaker, debating a Bill that is totally reprehensible? It is not even, Mr. Speaker, in any way that I can see. I have looked at the Bill and there's some clauses I want to come to a little later in my speech, Mr. Speaker, that I can't believe that the member, the Justice minister, can believe this Bill.

I don't think he created it, Mr. Speaker. I think he was done by other people and I just can't believe that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The feeling is mutual.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, Mr. Speaker, why are we not talking about constructive legislation? The farmers out there in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, are waiting for assistance from this government. Why doesn't the government introduce some farm aid legislation here in the legislature? I don't know, will the farmers benefit from this Bill, from this legislation? Well I don't think so. Will the farmers benefit from a witch-hunt?

Does the government understand, Mr. Speaker, that some of the people that they are out to destroy could very well be farmers, the very people that they have said have first priority? When they were on the election trail they said, that's our first priority — to our farmers. I don't see too much in this Bill that's going to help farmers, Mr. Speaker.

Civil servants that the NDP are denying severance pay could very well be farmers. Many farmers that I know have taken a second job, trying to save the farm.

Mr. Speaker, the cartoon that you see now and again depicting a farmer with a straw hat with a hole in it and the 3-tine pitchfork over his shoulder, bib overalls — Mr. Speaker, that is not a farmer today. Many farmers are quite capable of leaving the farm and taking a job with government and doing a good job. They could very well be the people that this Bill will destroy.

Mr. Speaker, many farmers do have income positions. And who is to say that this Bill is not hurting those very ones this government have said to us, you're very important to us. Where is the NDP pledge that agriculture will be number one priority? This Bill certainly isn't it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you can't just make statements and never do anything about it. Mr. Speaker, you cannot just fly to Ottawa and then say, yes, that should hold them; let's get the Tories. And that, it seems to me, is what's happening here, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't matter who it hurts, as long as we spill blue blood. How deep is it going to cut?

Mr. Speaker, the question I would ask, why doesn't this government stop wasting time on vengeful legislation? When is the thirst going to be quenched? Why do the members opposite want to spend millions of dollars defending and depending on this legislation, Mr. Speaker? Why do you want to spend a whole bunch of money defending this in court when a little bit of consultation . . . All you have to do is bring those people together.

And I don't think I'm prepared to listen to one or two bad deals as a reason to wipe out everyone. Let's talk about those bad deals. Let's talk to those people. And spending millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what we'll be doing. And I would say, don't kid yourself. Don't kid yourself that this legislation won't be challenged in court.

We have . . . as I said, when we first saw this Bill we were disturbed by it. We were disturbed enough to search out legal advice. Mr. Speaker, I'm not a lawyer. I don't know a lot about it. But there are people that we can ask. People who we trust for their opinion. And they tell us, Mr. Speaker, there will be many, many challenges of this Bill in court.

Mr. Speaker, what makes this Bill really, really bad, there are some people who may not have the financial resources to carry this Bill to court themselves. They may have to take class action in order to get recourse.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government is going to go to court defending this — this Bill that they are trying to ram down our throat. You're trying to ram it down our throat. There you go. I hit a nerve. I hit a nerve. Even the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order! Order! This House . . . Could I have order please. This House may be much better off if a few people absented themselves from the House so that the rest of us could carry on with the public's business. If some of you aren't going to do that, I'll assist you very shortly.

(2145)

Mr. Britton: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. If I offended the Chair, sir, I apologize.

As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, why do the members opposite want to spend millions of dollars defending this legislation in court? It doesn't have to go to court, and that's what we'll be doing. And make no mistake, make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government is going to go to court defending this Bill that they're trying to ram down our throat. We've seen evidence of this, Mr. Speaker, many times before. The *Leader-Post* reported on it.

Mr. Speaker, is not the real motive behind this legislation purely political? As the member from Thunder Creek pointed out many times, there is no other interpretation to put on this Bill. The public is busy. They are involved in the holiday season and they're not watching what the NDP do, Mr. Speaker. What a good time to push a Bill like this through the House. Political expediency, that's the only interpretation that I can put on this Bill.

They are not being closely watched and the NDP are slowing down and makes room for their patronage appointments — the things that they were never going to do. No, no, I'm different. Oh yes, the Premier said, oh I'm different. I'm not the old socialist any more. I'm the good guy. I'm the white-haired boy for Saskatchewan. Trust me. Trust me. So they did. They trusted him, Mr. Speaker, on that side of the House, and the first thing they do is put a Bill like this through.

Well it's not up to me to tell them what to do, I guess. The public will judge. The public will judge. Those bureaucrats as they're called, Mr. Speaker, they will judge. Yes, patronage appointments, Mr. Speaker — they claim they were not going to do that any more . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right. And I can't help but repeating it. They said there would be no more patronage. Time after time. I'm clean. I'm new. I'm the new guy. Well, open and honest — they are neither open, nor do I find very honest.

Mr. Speaker, this government resumed this sitting claiming they would be out of here in two weeks. That in itself is arrogant, Mr. Speaker. That's very arrogant. They decided before the House resumed that we'd be only here two weeks. How do you expect stuff like this to go through the House in two weeks? Then why does this government insist on introducing legislation that is so complex, so devious that we cannot possibly let it pass without scrutiny?

I would not be doing my job — the job that I went to the doors and asked for — if I was to let something like this go through, Mr. Speaker, without at least voicing my opposition to it. And I see laughter and I see hoots and hollers because maybe I'm not the world's best orator, but, Mr. Speaker, I believe in what I'm saying tonight; this is a bad Bill. And if the Minister of Justice is going to tell me that this is his Bill — this is the Bill that he wants to be remembered for — then I have misjudged that person.

Mr. Speaker, I think all of us sitting here tonight would much rather be home celebrating the season with our family. Why are we here? Mr. Speaker, we are not here to obstruct; we are here to be heard. We are here because, Mr. Speaker, in other Bills before this Assembly we cannot be heard. In this Bill, Mr. Speaker, we insist that we will be heard.

Mr. Speaker, we also know unless we can convince those people to listen, this Bill will go through. That's right. Because of our system, because of our system, Mr. Speaker, those people who have the majority rule. That's right.

Now I seem to hit a nerve with the Premier. He is not very comfortable over there. He is slinking deeper and deeper into his chair because he don't want to be seen . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, it's so close to Christmas I don't mind a chorus. So let him go ahead. He's only defeating himself. He's not hurting me.

Mr. Speaker, my family would like me to be home tonight. They are not unlike the members opposite. I'm sure their families are the same. I think all of us who have

children, who work, find that at the Christmas season that their holiday time is limited. We know that. Why am I here tonight, Mr. Speaker? Because I feel that I have to be here and defend the people who I represent that will not like this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — My family is no different than their family, not a bit. They do not want their season disrupted. Mr. Speaker, I cannot allow legislation such as this Bill before us passed through without a fight — without a fight, Mr. Speaker. I cannot let the NDP pick and choose who in the civil servant will go without what is rightfully theirs. My conscience, Mr. Speaker, would not allow that.

And I will stand here, Mr. Speaker, and I will be ridiculed. Let me say to the Premier, let me say this, Mr. Speaker, I would sooner be insulted than ignored. So let them carry on, let them carry on. The Premier wants to insult me, Mr. Speaker — fine. That's better than being ignored. It maybe tells us something about that person.

Mr. Speaker, why should I be at home enjoying this festive season when so many others would be spending it in fear of losing their jobs and their severance? I can't go home and enjoy my Christmas season, Mr. Speaker, when there are people who may lose — not the George Hills, I don't have to defend him, he'll defend himself. I'm not talking about him. I'm talking about the other innocent people they're trying to destroy here.

I agree with the leader of the Liberal Party. Why, why do you condemn all people because there's one or two packages that look a little bit lucrative. Why, why do you want to get everybody, because there's maybe a little bit of blue blood.

Why should these people be forced to sit through this season in fear, in fear of the NDP? Why? Those very people told us, Mr. Speaker, when we were promoting the Fair Share program, you're destroying families, you're destroying people. They don't know whether they're going to move or not. These people don't know who's next on their hit list.

This legislation legalized open hunting season on civil servants, Mr. Speaker. That's what it does, it opens the season. And in all respect, Mr. Speaker, I ask government, reconsider your actions. You can still ask for arbitration. You can still bring these people in and discuss with them, and if there's a few that you can't satisfy yourself about, all right, pick on those, but don't stake everybody. Why everybody?

Mr. Speaker, there is no need. There is no need in the province of Saskatchewan, in the country of Canada, for this kind of legislation — no need whatsoever.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — You have heard me, Mr. Speaker, stand in my place many times. And never have you heard me say that there was anything wrong with a union negotiating fair labour practices, fair wages. Mr. Speaker, those same people could do the same with this. Why, why do you

have to do it in this manner? I don't know. That's why I'm here. I want to find out.

I asked the Minister of Finance to reflect on the ramifications of this Bill, Mr. Speaker. Why was it introduced? Well, he says it's going to save 2 or \$3 million. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if he's going to save 2 or \$3 million dollars. I would ask him to allow his principles to guide his actions, Mr. Speaker.

One of my colleagues says, maybe they are. Well I don't know. I'm not here to cast aspersions on his character but I wonder about his judgement.

Mr. Speaker, do not let these people push this through, this legislation. I ask the minister, talk to your colleagues. I talk to the Minister of Justice. Do you want your name tagged to this piece of legislation for evermore? Is this the piece of legislation you want young lawyers to look at in the future and say that you guided this through into law? Is that what you want? You want to be remembered for that? No one else, Mr. Justice Minister, can be specifically tied to this Bill but yourself.

It will be the Bill known as the NDP Bill endorsed by the member from Saskatoon Fairview for ever. Now you want to go down in history, that's fine and dandy with me, but is that the kind of the way you want to do it? Mr. Justice Minister, don't allow your colleagues to sully your good name.

Mr. Speaker, I do not approve of this Bill before us. Mr. Speaker, I want to draw your attention to section 9 which gives me a lot of trouble, claim for loss or damage, no recourse. No recourse. Mr. Speaker, unjust dismissal, no recourse. No recourse. The minister says wrong. Then I suggest to you, sir, we better get you and some other legal people together and tell us. They say there is no recourse. That's all we're asking. Mr. Speaker, breach of contract. Breach of contract. No recourse. No recourse of breach of contract, Mr. Speaker. Inducing . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Will the member permit a question?

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Will the member permit a question?

Mr. Britton: — Mr. Speaker, in all respect, I suggest to the Minister I probably am not capable of answering it . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — The reason I say that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Right, come on. Because, Mr. Speaker, I am not a lawyer. But I will say to the Minister, I will sit down with you, sir, with a lawyer of my choosing and go through this with you, sir.

An Hon. Member: — I just want a copy of the legal opinions, that's all.

Mr. Britton: — I don't have that on my desk. But I say to you: I respect you, sir, I respect your ability, but I also

respect the ability of other lawyers who have . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay. And I want to go on.

Interference with, mental distress. If the members over there, Mr. Speaker, are telling me I'm wrong, if they say I'm out, then why do they not go . . . why don't we hold a conference with these people? Why do you push it through against the opinion of other lawyers? Are you right? Totally?

Take it to the Appeal Court. No, of course not because I believe, sir, you know it won't stand up. That's your problem. Mental distress, Mr. Speaker — no recourse, no recourse. Loss of reputation, loss of reputation. No recourse.

Mr. Speaker, defamation — defamation of character. No recourse. Mr. Speaker, "or any other cause." It's in section 9. Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, I'd like to introduce some people that are in your gallery.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, there are some members of my family in the gallery, who after I realized that we may be sitting here over the weekend, I phoned home and gave them an opportunity to come down to the city.

So the family is up in the gallery and I'd like to introduce them to you and have the members of the House welcome them to Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Assembly adjourned at 10 p.m.