

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Lorje: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I know I don't need to introduce this person to you, but I do believe that this person should be introduced to the House. I would like to welcome in the Speaker's gallery, Myrna Rolfes. And I'm sure that she's here to observe the proceedings and to see the diligence and competence with which you direct the proceedings this afternoon.

So I welcome Mrs. Rolfes.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Rolfes: — Members, I am really flabbergasted this afternoon. I do want to join with the member from Saskatoon Wildwood and welcome my family here. It's a distinct pleasure because this is our first time I believe in seven years that the family have been together at Christmas time. And I'm not very happy about being here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Rolfes: — Having said that, I do want to welcome my daughter from Los Angeles and her husband Matthew — Sherry — who lives in Los Angeles and I don't know how many years it's been since they've been here for Christmas but I think it's around seven years.

And I'd like to take the privilege of introducing my son who is here from Ottawa. And last but not least again, introduce my wife Myrna.

It's a pleasure having them here and I expect the best behaviour of all the members in the House this afternoon. With that I ask all members to welcome my family here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Social Services Cheque Pick-up Program

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Although this is not traditional, I would also like to join in welcoming your family here, Mr. Speaker. And I certainly hope that for the question period it puts you in a good mood, sir.

I address this in a serious vein, Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Social Services, the member from Saskatoon Westmount, and I deal with the poorest of the poor in Saskatchewan at Christmas.

Madam Minister, given the difficult economic times facing the province and the country and the financial strain this puts on both the taxpayers of the province and those who need help from those taxpayers in the form of welfare assistance, can you tell this Assembly what your intentions are with respect to the cheque pick-up program. Is this something that you feel is necessary to protect Saskatchewan taxpayers and to ensure that those who truly need it are provided assistance?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I regret to advise the Assembly and the hon. member that while I'm acting today for the minister who is absent, I'm not familiar with her position or the position of the department with respect to the matters that you raise.

I can only say that we will certainly be going out of our way to ensure that all people who are in a position where they have to have access to the programs of the Department of Social Services have a merry and comfortable Christmas, and we'll try and accommodate them in every way we can.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, I direct the question perhaps to the Deputy Premier then, who is responsible for the machinations of this government. And I can appreciate, Mr. Minister, that you have a difficulty on this but that does not detract from the seriousness of the questions that I am asking here today because the government has demonstrated insensitivity to many of our welfare recipients.

Mr. Minister, we have been given a copy of a letter sent to all welfare recipients signed by Madam Minister which states that you have cancelled the welfare cheque pick-up which was to take place on Monday, December 23. Instead, Mr. Minister, Madam Minister says that you will mail those cheques out on Monday the 23. Now I would think that all of us would recognize that in the hustle and bustle and heavy volume of mail during the Christmas season, those cheques will not be in the mail and in the hands of the recipients before Christmas.

Mr. Minister, can you explain to this Assembly, can you explain to those on welfare, why you have stolen any hope for joy for these families on Christmas Day?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, it strikes me that the member's point is worth looking into and I'll undertake, on behalf of the government, to look into the suggestion right away.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And a new question to the Minister.

Mr. Minister, I have been receiving dozens of phone calls in my office, letters on that outrageous letter that was sent out by the minister. And ironically I might add, this letter arrived in the welfare recipients' homes at the same time that a Christmas card came from the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Minister, this change stated that it would provide "... more time and opportunity to pursue personal interests during the Christmas holidays." That is a quote from that letter, Mr. Minister.

And I ask you: don't you think the number one personal matter that these people have during this time of year is to find money, to find food and clothing for the winter months? What do you think they will be doing? And what do you think that they would be doing to take priority over getting this much-needed funds for the holiday season? Or is it your government's intention to actually play the role of "The Grinch That Stole Christmas"? Mr. Minister, answer that.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — It's quite ironic, Mr. Speaker, that the members of the opposition, the former government of this province, would be raising questions concerning a welfare reform and the pick up of cheques.

It was the welfare reform and the picking up of cheques that were such a harassment to people who were on welfare for such a long period of time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The cheque pick-up was seen clearly for what it was by welfare recipients, and that was some kind of a Draconian kind of check to ensure that they had to come in and get their social welfare benefits on hands and knees, and present themselves no matter what the inconvenience to them personally at the office in order to pick up their cheques.

Now I've said to the member, and I repeat again, that we have a great deal of sympathy and understanding for the position of welfare recipients. And we're going to go out of our way to ensure that they have a comfortable and a merry Christmas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Speaker, a new question to the minister. Mr. Minister, you have just stated that you're philosophically opposed to having these welfare recipients pick up cheques at the offices.

The minister's letter states that this is only going to be for one month that they have to pick it up and after that they'll go back to the old program. How do you square that?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm not familiar with the letter that the member refers to. What I said was, the pick-up program was designed by this government to deliberately harass welfare recipients. That was the plan at the time and that was indeed the effect and welfare recipients know it.

This is the same party that did away with the transportation allowance, for example.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — So that recipients who had to go for some distance in order to get to the office to pick up their cheques had to do it without the transportation allowance that had previously been there.

But I'm telling the member, I'm telling the member that we will take notice of his question, that we will . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member knows full well he can't make an explanation and then take notice of the question.

I'll take the next question, but before I do so I'll ask the members please, I thought we were going to be on good behaviour today. There's just too much interruption.

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Minister, what you're saying, what you're philosophical outburst does not square with, what your minister is telling the social welfare recipients and I quote. She says after they will be mailed on the 23rd of the month of December so that these people will not be able to get their money. They will not be able to get their money before Christmas. She says normal cheque pick-up will be scheduled at the end of January for the February. They're back into the old ways. Then she ends the letter by saying, may I wish you a Merry Christmas. Square that, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I tried to make it clear to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, that we would look into the matter that he raised, and we will do that, Mr. Speaker, in an effort to ensure that the recipients of social welfare have the money in time for Christmas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — A new question, Mr. Speaker, and we'll go the Deputy Premier on this one, the Minister of Finance who is responsible for this reprehensible situation, in my opinion.

Mr. Minister, because of your philosophical opposition to the pick-up of these cheques, Mr. Minister, could you not have mailed those cheques out earlier if this was your intent, so that these people would have been assured prompt delivery of their money before Christmas; so that indeed they would be able to buy the food and buy the clothing that is necessary for them to have the merry Christmas that your minister is wishing them?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I thought I had made it plain to the member that I thought he raised a good point and that we would be looking into it in an effort to ensure that the people who are in receipt of social service benefits will get them in time for Christmas. And I repeat that again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — I take it then, Mr. Speaker — and I direct my question to the Minister of Finance — I take it then that you are making a commitment to this House that on Monday, December 23, this money will be available for these welfare recipients to pick up their money before Christmas? Is that a commitment that you're making right now?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — My commitment is to look into the point that has been raised by the member, and we will try and ensure that the people who receive social welfare benefits receive them in good time for Christmas.

Mr. Neudorf: — That indeed is going to be hollow comfort for hollow stomachs, Mr. Minister, for many of

these people.

Mr. Speaker, I direct the next question to the Minister of Finance again, or the Minister of Justice if he chooses to answer. We have a letter here, or not a letter, but a news release given by one Leona Tootoosis of the Circle Centre native ministry.

She has issued a statement saying that you are refusing to let people have their cheques before Christmas. She says that the poor are, quote, “faced with the humiliation and deprivation of no Christmas to offer their children.” She adds that “it is a strange thing to do . . .” for the Madam Minister of Social Services to her constituents and to her neighbours.

Now, Mr. Speaker, will you do the decent thing: will you try to find the Christmas spirit which must be hidden somewhere in your heart and allow these individuals to pick up the cheques before Christmas? Can you make that commitment to this Legislative Assembly and for the poorest of poor in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I have this sense of having answered the same question about four or five times. I repeat to the member that I . . . He raises a point that I think is an important point, and we will look into it in an effort to ensure that the people who are in receipt of welfare benefits will receive them in time for Christmas.

I am not familiar with the particular document that he is referring to but that's beside the point, Mr. Minister. He's made his point and we have responded to it in the way that I have already done about four or five times.

Farm Foreclosure Moratorium

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question to the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, my question is to you, the person that has broken your party's election promise at election time to introduce a moratorium on farm foreclosures within days of winning government.

Mr. Speaker, the minister and the Premier know full well that throughout the campaign they were telling farmers that a moratorium would definitely be imposed. In fact the NDP put out their five-point agriculture plan everywhere they went which included as point five a moratorium on farm foreclosures.

Mr. Speaker, how can the minister continue to claim that his party made no such commitment to the farmers of Saskatchewan? Please answer.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The commitment made during the election campaign was that we would engage in a discussion with the lending institutions in order to seek short- and long-term solutions to the crisis. We will find a solution to the crisis, and we will continue to work very hard to make it a voluntary one that's shared with everyone, because it's a very serious question in which all of us have a stake.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to waffle as he has been for the last three weeks in answering questions pertaining to farmers in this House. The minister knows in his heart that you did promise a moratorium. You know in here that you did. And I know that the member from Saskatoon Broadway would agree with me on this point. We all know that in this House of the actions yesterday. And we know very well that every individual in this province of Saskatchewan, the media, the government, and the opposition, that this moratorium was promised.

Now I ask you, what is the government's plan to help farmers, while they try to settle the internal squabbles among themselves, whether they're going to impose a moratorium or not?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I find it very interesting that the members opposite have sat there for nine years, not only watching the debt crisis grow but contributing to it through programs like the production loan program which began this crisis for many, many farmers, establishing no long-term strategy for any kind of policy on agriculture. Their policy was money at election time, no plans for any long-term solutions.

You ignored the need for stable, long-term income programs. You rejected any actions on debt. And then in two weeks you want us to play that silly game of quick, off-the-cuff kind of solutions.

We're committed to working with the people that have a critical interest in this industry and who don't want to play political games, like you've played for nine years, and don't want to play political games now. We're going to work with them to work out solutions and we want you to work with us.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, that has been the worst display of an answer from the Minister of Agriculture — a new Minister of Agriculture — that I've ever heard through my 13 years in this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Muirhead: — I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the minister has read the headlines today: Moratorium worries chamber. Because, Mr. Speaker, I have listened to him intently say that their promise was to visit with bankers, visit with lending institutions, and here a Mr. Rollie Hardy of the Bank of Montreal, the chairman of the Saskatchewan committee of Canadian Bankers' Association, says the issue of moratoriums has not come up.

Will he now come clean in this House and tell us whether he has ever discussed a moratorium with any lender in this province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I ask the member from Wilkie to withdraw that statement that he made in that the Minister of Agriculture is misleading the House. He knows that's unparliamentary and I ask him to withdraw the statement. I ask the member from Wilkie to withdraw the statement.

Mr. Britton: — Mr. Speaker, if I offended the Chair, I apologize . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

The Speaker: — I didn't ask the member to apologize, I asked him to withdraw. And he withdrew the statement.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — It's okay, I've got a decent memory, member opposite.

The reality is, as I stated yesterday to you and to the press, that during the discussions that are going on I will not be making public statements about what's going on in negotiations, because that disrespects the presence of others at the table. And we are working co-operatively with them and we appreciate their co-operation at the table. And we do expect to be able to work out some long-term and short-term solutions working co-operatively. That was our commitment in the election campaign; that's what we're doing.

And the farmers in Saskatchewan know that these kinds of sound planning solutions are the kinds of solutions they're looking for, not the kind of things you think up in the shower when you're getting up and out of bed in the morning.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Minister of Agriculture. Perhaps he didn't hear my question, because he didn't even come close to answering it. Because someone's misleading the people in Saskatchewan — either the minister or the banker, one or the other.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with your permission I want to read the full quote:

The provincial government so far has only opened discussions with financial institutions about how farmers' financial problems could be addressed.

In fact, (now listen carefully, please) Rollie Hardy of the Bank of Montreal and the chairman of the Saskatchewan committee of the Canadian Bankers Association says the issue of moratoriums has not come up.

Now please, this has not come up. So, Mr. Speaker, will the minister stand to his feet and say who is misleading, who is misleading the people in the province of Saskatchewan? — you or Mr. Rollie from the Bank of Montreal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I would ask the member opposite to

go home and get his dictionary and look up the word moratorium and then interpret the article accordingly, and I think it will be very clear to him.

What we committed ourselves to in the election campaign was to discuss long-term solutions and short-term solutions with the financial institutions. And we are doing that. And I appreciate the co-operation that the financial institutions are giving us, and I wish you would give us an equal co-operation because the situation is very serious for our people in Saskatchewan.

And you will find out when you understand the word that nobody's misleading anybody.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that the minister does not have to ask me what the word moratorium means. What he has to do is ask all the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan what the word moratorium means. Ask them. They know what it means. They know what a broken promise means.

Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Minister of Agriculture.

The Speaker: — Order, order. I hate to interrupt again, but the Leader of the Opposition has been interrupting on a number of times. And if he has a question, I think there's ample opportunity for him to get on his feet. But in the meantime allow the member from Arm River to ask his question.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, they not only break their promises to all the people of Saskatchewan, they break their promises to their own people.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, out at Davidson, Saskatchewan, there was a meeting and this meeting, the minutes was in the Davidson paper on December 2, and the speaker was Mr. Jake Bendel, who they know quite well.

And if I may, I just want to read a little bit of his quote. Mr. Speaker, this is what it says: that you promised to impose a moratorium. He said, you promised. Now that's your own worker out there. That you promised to impose a moratorium. Was the Premier misleading this group just to get their vote, or will he be honest with them and admit he was wrong to have made the promise in the first place.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I want the members opposite to understand that Jake Bendel is the head of the Christian Farm Crisis Action Committee and he is not associated with my office. And you should be aware of that.

I want you to recognize that the issue of debt is inextricably linked to the question of income. I want you to remind yourself that last spring, in a big hurry to try and meet a spring election deadline, you introduced too hurriedly an income support program which projects for farmers an ability to carry about \$50,000 of debt for an average farmer, if you don't take depreciation, with a below poverty line income. That if you take depreciation into account, this program supports no debt. And you're talking about debt problems?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, it's very evident that the minister and this government wants to break — wants to break — the promise and is breaking the promise of a farm moratorium to all the farmers in Saskatchewan. But I think it's a shame when they send their own people out like Jake Bendel to spread the good news for 30 days. And I want to read this other quote that Mr. Jake Bendel stated very clearly: that we inform the Premier of our intention to have him place into force the moratorium that he promised would be the first action taken by the new government.

Now tell us, Mr. Minister, tell us Mr. Minister, did you give him the wrong message to send out for those 30 days, or are you just breaking the promise to him? Now tell us please, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I want to tell you what our commitment was. Our commitment was to, after election, to look co-operatively for solutions to the farm debt questions both short and long term. I want you to know that during the time you were in office, the United States had legislation in place during which they dealt with their farm debt crisis from '83 onward, and their debt problem is subsiding because of the actions they took.

I want you to know that you played footsie with the federal government with respect to changes in our kinds of legislation that allows this situation to be addressed, so that the debt situation continued to climb. The only thing that you ever could lay claim to, and sometimes not very honourably, was the idea of going to look for money during election campaigns. I want you to know that in the case of last summer when you went looking for money, the farmers had already got it by their actions in Rosetown — not by some self-egotistical statement of the Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, I hope when the minister goes home for holidays that he can learn to relax and not shake, and then when he comes back that he can answer questions.

My last question, Mr. Speaker, my last question to the minister is this: do you not admit that this last three weeks that we've been in this House that you have been answering all the questions pertaining to agriculture and a moratorium, whether it was right for a promise or not, will you not admit that you've been answering very shallow and that you have been misleading this House and the people in the province of . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I ask the member to . . . I ask the member to withdraw that statement. I ask the member to withdraw the statement that the Minister of Agriculture was misleading the House.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, that's a hard thing for me an honest man to have to withdraw the truth.

The Speaker: — Order. I ask the member one more time

to withdraw the statement that the Minister of Agriculture was misleading the House.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Speaker, it would be an easy way for me to go home for Christmas, but I will withdraw the statement — I will withdraw the statement.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I will answer one more time consistently, that we made the commitment to work on behalf of farmers. And farmers believe we're doing that, and we are doing it. And there will be a solution. And we believe it will be a voluntary and co-operative solution.

I want you to know that in the period of time leading up to now, there's now 1.3 million acres in the hands of financial institutions. I want you to know that additionally, in terms of the income which so critically affects that, when you negotiated your program last spring with the federal government, not only did it give inadequate support to farmers, it committed this province to a 3 to 400 per cent increase in cost for stabilization programs, while the federal government contributed only an additional 10 per cent, while we're suffering the worst financial situation in agriculture in a lifetime.

I find it absolutely ludicrous that you could be making those kinds of comments when you look at your history and your record.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Supplementary to the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, your candidate in Thunder Creek, one Ron Bishoff, was recorded in the minutes of the credit union meeting in Marquis as saying, the first act of an NDP government would be to bring in a moratorium and that credit unions would be excluded from that moratorium.

You are clearly on record, sir, that the bankers association say that you have not discussed moratorium with them. Have you, sir, met with the credit unions and said that they will be excluded from any moratorium action which you bring in, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I don't know if the members opposite have never been involved in the negotiations. It may appear from the results of the negotiations on federal programs that they possibly never were in a serious fashion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — If you think that anybody in his right mind would stand here and talk to you about what's going on in negotiations when you're quoting third-hand sources of information for your political purposes, you obviously don't respect the process.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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 on 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. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I'm pleased to resume the debate on Bill 18 as where I left off this morning, where I tried to talk the Minister of Justice into reconsidering the direction in which his government is going, in so far as the abrogation of the individual rights that are going to be lost when this Bill becomes law.

I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if I had much success in that but I will continue to try to convince him. And I won't take very much time in doing this, Mr. Speaker, perhaps five or six minutes, but we must impress upon the government that this Bill now be not read a second time.

And I intend to continue to speak up along that vein, Mr. Speaker, because the amazing thing is that this entire Bill is unnecessary. It need not have come to this.

The government, Mr. Speaker, has many options, and what I want to do is to outline some alternatives. It's very easy for any opposition, Mr. Speaker, to criticize, to condemn, to tear down, and to tear apart. It is more difficult for an opposition to say constructively, you should not be doing that because you should be doing this.

And, Mr. Speaker, I intend now to offer some alternatives to members opposite for their perusal and hopefully for the adoption of these suggestions. Because first of all, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is ostensibly to reduce unfair severance payments. And on the surface of that, this side of the House has no opposition on that principle. That is not what the issue is at stake. The issue at stake is the manner in which that severance cut is trying to be accomplished, and that is what is so damning about this Bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, when an employer and an employee have a disagreement about what is fair compensation, Mr. Speaker, what happens? I ask the Minister of Labour, I ask the Minister of Justice, what happens when you have a disagreement between an employer and an employee? Normally the course of action is some form of negotiation.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I might add that in the private sector, a failure to negotiate in good faith is literally against the law. We are expected to negotiate in good faith. Any private sector employer that has tried this or would try

that would be fired by this government. You negotiate, Mr. Speaker. You try to come to a reasonable agreement that all parties think is fair. You do not hold a big public effort to try to take away the rights and the freedoms of literally thousands of people who get caught up in this cross-fire of vengeance which the government members opposite are intending to accomplish.

Well, Mr. Speaker, why did this government not try to negotiate, even one little effort, Mr. Speaker, to save the last resort of this legislation. No, Mr. Speaker, the government literally said no, it was above negotiation. It said that this government has 55 members scattered across this Legislative Assembly on both sides of the House, so there is nothing that we as an opposition can do to stop them.

So they say let us just steamroller the opposition, and we'll get a nice play in the media for bringing in a law that will do away with severance. And in the meantime we'll chuck out the rights and the freedoms of the individual. Because in their eyes, Mr. Speaker, the individual is of no consequence whatsoever. And we've heard that expressed from a number of members on opposite side. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a shame.

The opposition will never oppose it. The opposition will never oppose it, in my opinion, is what the government thought originally. The government thought they had made such a good move in the public expectation and the public execution of George Hill, that the opposition would just simply stand aside and let them have their way.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they are wrong. They are sadly wrong. In my opinion, they should have tried negotiation first. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are more alternatives that the government could have done. They could have referred the whole thing to an independent, outside arbitrator. They could have done that, and it is done quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, both by government and private employers. But this government would not even consider it.

Mr. Speaker, they could even have introduced a Bill that forced binding arbitration. That was another alternative. You could have come in simply with a Bill of binding arbitration that would not have trampled on the rights of any individual, but they chose not to do that either, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And why not? Why no effort in negotiation? Why isn't this Bill about arbitration on severance? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because if it was just about severance, then people — and I revert back to my comments before dinner — if it would have been a Bill just about severance, then people would still have their freedom of conscience that I spent time talking about. They would still have had their freedom of belief, their freedom of association, their right to be secure in their person.

And, Mr. Speaker, the government obviously did not want them to have those rights. The government, in my opinion, prefers a climate of fear in the public service, and they want to fire public servants, willy-nilly without thought for the individuals, their families, and least of all

their rights.

That, in my opinion, is the agenda of the government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government is doing these things just before Christmas, a season of hope, of love, of charity. And this government is literally legalizing hate, defamation, and psychological abuse. In my opinion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is one of the most profoundly, one of the most profoundly shameful Bills that has ever been presented in this Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are many other flaws in this Bill, somewhat of less dramatic influence and consequences, none the less of great concern to the opposition. And for the reasons I have outlined, and for reasons that my colleagues will be outlining in the next few moments here, it is certainly my intent to vote in favour of the amendment that this Bill now not be read a second time.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a few comments in support of the amendment. The amendment of course is that this Bill not be read a second time and referred to the Public Accounts Committee. And I will give my reasons for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There are a number of things that I mentioned in my speech last night that my colleague from Rosthern has talked about again this morning about the danger of this particular piece of legislation; the danger that it has for individuals in our society.

But I guess, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what bothers me terribly about this thing, as I said last night, is it seems to have so many political connotations tied to it rather than good common sense. It isn't about economics; it isn't about saving money; it isn't about encouraging people to come to our province and work; it isn't about treating people fairly. This thing seems to be centred on politics and politics only. And I'll tell you why, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In the Bill, one of the clauses says:

... includes any claim in damages or debt for unjust dismissal, breach of contract, inducing breach of contract, interference with a contract, mental distress, loss of reputation, defamation or any other (cause of) action in contract, tort of equity arising from or incidental to the creation, termination or expiration of a Crown employment contract.

Now that pretty well covers the piece, Mr. Speaker, when you're talking about simply people that were associated with the former government. And it seems like so many other actions that this government takes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, only folks that are associated with the former government. In other words, one of the premises that there has to be some sort of blood test involved for these things to flow through.

And I'll tell you why this particular amendment is

pertinent to the Public Accounts Committee. Because the government neglected certain things that are always of interest to the Public Accounts Committee. They neglected certain things in this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Public Accounts Committee has talked about for many years. And they ignored these things because they would primarily affect friend . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. The rules of debate in the legislature require that only one speaker be on his feet at one time. If others want to enter the debate they should wait for their turn to do so, otherwise I would ask them to leave the Chamber and carry on their conversation elsewhere.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your assistance.

As I was saying, there are a number of issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that have been of interest to Public Accounts and shortly we'll go through these particular interests.

But the reason I believe that they have been left out of this particular legislation is that they may pertain to certain newly acquired friends of the government. For instance at no place in this list that I read out do we include such things as the provision of advice, the provision of speech writing, the provision for consultation on any sort of level, the provisions for polling. And we all know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a member of Public Accounts, that the costs incurred in five firms of polling sometimes runs into in fact millions of dollars.

And the contracts that are associated with that I notice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are not in this particular legislation. The design, production, placement of advertising for instance, or other instruments of communication and the arrangements that go along with them are not in this particular piece of legislation.

Those things I think you would agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have often been the topic of the Public Accounts Committee, representing the minister or the Executive Council or any Crown agency.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know there are many ways that those things can be achieved at a fairly extensive cost to the taxpayer; that the people performing those services can be paid at an extensive cost to the taxpayer. But those things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are not covered. And they're not covered because all I can see behind this particular piece of legislation is politics.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, otherwise the minister would have been prepared to accept comments made by my colleagues earlier, who pointed out discrepancies such as these as they pertained to newly hired people by the government. But no, we go back to the fact that these are all individuals, some of whom, Mr. Deputy Speaker, superseded the previous government by the way, some that have worked for government for decades; but the fact that at some point in their public life they expressed an opinion as to their own personal preferences, their own ideals of how society should be structured. And it seems, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that only those individuals in our society that do not follow a socialist path are the ones that

are being targeted.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the latest *Supplementary Information 1990-91 for Public Accounts*, my colleague from Morse took the opportunity to start looking through their figures that you, sir, would be very familiar with after all your years on that committee. And we go to the Department of Justice alone in this province and have identified 401 people that are either out of scope or order in council.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said last night, there is no sunset clause in this provision in this Bill. And the question was placed last night, how far is the broom going to sweep? How far are we going to cut . . . 401 in the Department of Justice alone. You take every department of government, sir, and I say to you, you will find thousands and thousands of people in the same situation. And are we to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that should one of those people express on their own time, in their holidays, in the privacy of their home with friends, that they are not socialists, that they happen to support parties other than the one which governs this province, that this legislation and the ability to get rid of those people will not be used. Because I have seen no assurance in the legislation from the minister that that be the case.

(1445)

Now I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Minister of Justice is an honourable man. And I am sure probably that the people in the Department of Justice all across our province, those 400-and-plus that are in this position, probably don't have to fear the Minister of Justice.

But I can only draw a conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from comments and actions of this government that those people should fear others in the New Democratic Party; that those people should fear the friends of the New Democratic Party. They should fear people like Barb Byers and George Rosenau. They should fear people like Daryl Bean; people that would talk in the way that Mr. Bean has about individuals in our society.

And we already have one casualty of those three people — Mr. Perry, a man who's had no political affiliation in his lifetime, a man that simply said, I will go to work and I will feed my family. And the actions of the friends of the New Democratic Party have now put Mr. Perry — have now put Mr. Perry — under Bill 18.

Now I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why this amendment is right and proper; why this Bill should not be read a second time; that it should have sober second thought. And if the Minister of Justice doesn't feel that the appellate court of Saskatchewan under a constitutional reference is the proper place to at least have second thought, perhaps the Public Accounts Committee of this legislature dealing with some of the items that are listed here, items which come before Public Accounts on a yearly basis, could be dealt with by that committee to ensure that that minister and that government clean this particular piece of legislation up so that it isn't the onerous piece of work that we see before us in this House today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said last night, the track record of this government in its early stages does not appear to be good in protecting the rights of citizens in this province. As I said last night, one only has to look at the Gass Commission behind closed doors.

One only has to see a Minister of Finance bring in a financial statement put together and audited, as he says, by Deloitte Touche to know that the chairman of the Gass Commission, on any reference during the Gass tribunal hearings, any reference to the Crown Management Board, that individual should leave the room, according to any principles of conflict of interest that you and I understand.

The Minister of Finance brings it in; he says it's prepared, the portion on Crown Management Board, is prepared by Deloitte Touche. And given those rules, that person should exit the room and then we would be left with three NDP partisans doing the deliberations on Crown Management Board.

Now that kind of a record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I come as a member of this legislature to study legislation such as Bill 18, has to give me pause to think, because obviously the rights of individuals have been trod upon. The same Finance minister comes before this House and wishes to supersede all the rules and precedents of this House to deliver his financial package.

He says it isn't a budget. It looks like a budget, but it isn't one, and I will not have my ministers answer for anything that they do in the final quarter. So I have pause to think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I received this piece of legislation late in this legislative session — not number one, not a very difficult piece of legislation which all people in society would like to look at, but delivered late in the day, after all these other things have occurred — delivered late in the day as we approach Christmas Day. And it makes me wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why no sober second thought is possible.

And I come back to my first premise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It must be political. It must be that this government has an agenda to use this massive majority that they have in this legislative Chamber to drive this piece of legislation open and through just prior to Christmas Eve.

As my colleague from Arm River said, it seems strange that the rights that so many people have fought for over the years need to be rushed through a couple of days before Christmas.

The constitutional references on important legislation are sought all across our land. And those references go ahead. When the current government was in opposition and we discussed the Rafferty-Alameda project, these people were for process infinitum. I mean the court system could not do enough for the New Democratic Party when we were discussing Rafferty-Alameda. We were going to have a court reference to every court in this land, infinitum, and sometimes twice and three times.

And member after member after member stood in here and said, that is the right way to go, that we should have these references because we might be harming the

environment, we might be harming the Americans, and we might be harming all hosts of people. So we want court references. The member from Regina Rosemont stood, time and time and time and time again in this Assembly, and he saw nothing wrong with the court seeking a reference.

Now the Minister of Justice says no, we don't have time. I don't want to negotiate. I don't want to have third party arbitration. I don't want to have the Public Accounts Committee look at it in case somebody might look into our polling; somebody might look into who's doing our speech writing; somebody might look into who's representing our ministers — Mr. Deputy Speaker, breaking precedents that have been set in this land for as long as we've been a province and a country.

The union friends of the NDP who got rid of Mr. Perry with this legislation and his ability to go to court as an individual and get his severance would never, ever stand for the same kind of treatment by this Legislative Assembly or any other. If members came in and tried to do that to those particular unions represented by those people I'm sure that Mr. Bean would stand in self-righteousness on some stump and read the same message that he talked about with scabs, only this time he'd include politicians in it, I'm sure. And I'm sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that probably some politicians in this country probably fit the category of Mr. Bean already.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is only right and proper that this legislation have some type of sober second thought attached to it. If it is not the Public Accounts Committee, and if it isn't the Court of Appeal, at least let it be this Chamber.

Let that Minister of Justice listen to the amendments that will be brought forward by the opposition. And instead of simply saying out of hand in this Chamber in a few hours, we won't accept those amendments, at least accept the amendments which have had legal opinion attached to them, that have had the Legislative Law Clerk look at them, have had some outside opinion. At least be able to take those amendments today and say: I will give them due consideration. As the highest law officer in this province, I will seek outside opinion beyond my friends. That I will seek an outside opinion that will allow me to come in with a reasoned judgement on those amendments, so that this legislature in a later session can know that it has done the right thing. And that is why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting this particular amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want the opportunity to add a few words in support of the amendment.

And what I want to raise in this Legislative Assembly is the degree of hypocrisy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is being exemplified by the government in their Bill with respect to unfair and patronage appointments when in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I will point out, I have here in my hand the other side of that when it comes to talking about being fair.

What I have before me is the *Democratic Reforms for the 1990's* by the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party, January, 1991. I'm going to quote from some of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I think the public needs to know how the New Democrats talk one line and then do exactly the opposite when it comes to a piece of legislation like this that is very, very unacceptable to the public and to the legal profession and to all members of the Assembly when you really look at it. And indeed, Mr. Speaker, how they talk a line, whether it's in agriculture outside the House or outside when they're running for office, and something completely different when they get inside.

I want to start, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the NDP's *Reforms for the 1990's*, I quote from page 26, and I'm just going to read what they say should be happening with respect to hiring and firing. This is called "HIRING PRACTICES" by the NDP.

All Saskatchewan people (and I'm quoting) have the right to expect equal opportunity of access to government employment — i.e., that men and women are hired for the Saskatchewan public service and appointed to Saskatchewan crown corporations, boards and commissions on the basis of their professional merit, not on the basis of their politics. In addition, the Saskatchewan public has a right to access to information regarding the terms of employment of individuals hired by the government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP in their own reform documents in leading up to an election to get people to support them, say that all hirings in the public service with respect to Crown corporations, boards, and commissions should be on the basis of professional merit, not on the basis of their politics. It goes on to say:

Many of these positions within crown corporations and prominent regulatory bodies require the kind of experience and expertise simply not found in the backgrounds of individuals appointed on the basis of their political ties.

Leaving the impression, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they would not do anything political or anything to do with patronage.

The growing number of high-profile patronage and otherwise questionable appointments has increased public cynicism (says the NDP just prior to the election).

(1500)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll go on to page 28 and it says the following. This is the NDP speaking again, talking to the public about how sanctimonious they're going to be with respect to their appointments and how they treat public servants.

Young people across the province have learned from similar experience that it matters more who

they know than what their qualifications are to find government employment.

Implying that the NDP would never do this. It wouldn't matter that you happen to know an NDPer because it has nothing to do with what the new reforms say should be in operations in a new government. It goes on to say, this NDP document prior to an election:

The integrity, impartiality and professionalism of the Saskatchewan public service have been damaged by these practices at all levels.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've heard people and my colleagues here, go through this Bill that is proposed here to take away rights, to pull civil servants out, to change the way contracts are, to remove all access to legal remedy in one piece of legislation.

And prior to the election the NDP have said:

The integrity, impartiality and professionalism of the Saskatchewan public service has been damaged by these practices at all levels.

Implying they'd never do anything like that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have never witnessed, and the public of Saskatchewan have never witnessed, such diametrically opposed pieces of paper as *Democratic Reforms for the 1990's* by the NDP prior to the election, and the Bill that's on the floor of the legislature right now.

It's unbelievable that the two pieces could be put together by the same people who ran. A recent employment advertisement for an area manager in customer services for the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation listed sensitivity to political realities as part of the job description, and they say that shouldn't be part of it now. You shouldn't be close to partisan politics, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It goes on to say:

When a government agency blatantly promotes hiring on the basis of patronage and favouritism, it is little wonder that there has been a general decline in public understanding and appreciation of the principles of public service, as well as corresponding decline in the morale of the public service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the NDP have said in 1991 prior to the election is that patronage has no part of the public service. Hiring and firing should have no part of the public service. This is the way that they would do it, and they put this document in all of their ridings. The cabinet ministers and back-benchers held up this document at public meetings. This is what we would do, they say. And then we see the legislation that is here that takes away every single solitary right, and it's just based on politics whether you can work for the provincial government or not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I defy any member of the NDP to take the two pieces of paper and actually put them

together and say these are consistent with any individual's heart or soul or compassion or sense of justice.

The NDP paper goes on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and says this and I quote:

Patronage costs Saskatchewan taxpayers (a great deal). Government is robbed of competence, fairness and productivity when the merit principle is abandoned as the criterion for accessing public service jobs and obtaining advancement.

So says the NDP. Not surprisingly today the public of Saskatchewan is less trusting and less forgiving of people and institutions than they were years ago — 10 years ago. Public attitudes toward institutions of our society — the public service, the legislature, the justice system — have changed in the relationship of the public to government as times become volatile.

The implication, Mr. Speaker, is because of patronage, and they wouldn't have any patronage. This is their white paper, their guiding principles for how they would operate in government. The volatility makes all the more important the role played by stabilizing institutions such as the public service and other vital components of our system of parliamentary government. An attempt must be made, the NDP say, to address this loss of confidence and public cynicism toward the public service and restore the foundation of broadly based trust is essential for any public enterprise to succeed.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you think this Bill is the first step by the NDP to restore the foundation of broadly based non-partisan trust in the public service in Saskatchewan or in Canada? There wouldn't be an NDPer across the country or North America or any place else who would say, this will restore non-patronage feelings in the public service.

I mentioned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the outset the hypocrisy of standing up and getting elected with this piece of paper, of how you should do it and turning around and getting elected and within days bringing in a piece of legislation that is abhorred by every lawyer every place, except those partisans that sit here and say, well we're elected now, we can do as we like, we can take away rights, we can do the opposite to what we promised — shame, shame, Mr. Speaker, shame, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Let me go on to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on page 28, I quote from the NDP:

All appointments to government agencies, boards and commissions should be based on merit, not political patronage.

Did you hear that? I'll repeat that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is the NDP prior to the election. They said this:

All appointments to government agencies, boards and commissions should be based on merit, not on political patronage. Relevant professional organizations and interest groups should be

consulted whenever possible in determining lists of candidates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, are we to assume the former NDP candidates, the former NDP cabinet ministers, the former NDP campaign managers are not patronage appointments? Do they think they're kidding somebody now when they stand in their place and say, this is the way they would do it on the boards and commissions, and running Crown corporations. I mean, with great respect, Jack Messer was an NDP cabinet minister and he is now in charge of Sask Power Corporation.

But here it says:

All appointments to government agencies, boards and commissions should be based on merit, not on political patronage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these people have made mockery of their *Democratic Reforms for the 1990's*. And all across this province and all across Canada, people are going to see through that. That's why people are phoning us and writing us and saying, don't support this piece of legislation; it's the wrong thing to.

And what's most appalling in fact is the hypocrisy of them saying one thing prior to the election. They would be holier than thou, no patronage at all, here are the rules. And then come in here and within days take away every civil servant's rights — human rights, Charter of Rights, legal opportunities and rights — that you've ever seen. The most blatant piece of patronage and removal of rights you've seen in Saskatchewan and indeed Canadian history.

The code of ethical conduct, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on page 30, this is what the NDP say:

The people of Saskatchewan have a right to expect honesty and fairness from their political representatives and public servants in the discharge of their public duties . . . They want politics and the public service to be respected and honourable professions as intended within our parliamentary system of government.

And they go on to say, and leave the impression that this is the kind of thing that they would do to make sure there was no patronage in the public service. And then within days, they introduce this legislation.

I should get the last paragraph of that Act to read it over and over and over again so that the members opposite and particularly those that have some legal background can listen to the implications that that has for the public of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you look at this paper, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP's reforms for the 1990s, and you look at the Bill itself and you go back through the introduction of the Bill, the last part of the Bill, or we just go to the blues. It's An Act to Provide for the Public Disclosure of Crown Employment Contracts, to Prescribe Provisions in Crown Employment Contracts governing Payments and Benefits on 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.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP have reached new heights in political hypocrisy in the Saskatchewan legislature and the Saskatchewan public.

The last page of their document which says that they are going to be so forthright and non-partisan in the administration of the public service says:

Public confidence could be restored to the systems of government tendering and hiring. Service to the public could once again become the primary reason for entering politics in government.

Honesty in government is a high priority of the New Democratic Caucus. A strong will and commitment to ethics in the political process is necessary for any government to combat the dangerous practices of patronage, favouritism and corruption which threaten our parliamentary democracy.

They end their paper, the New Democratic paper on reforms and how they would govern by saying that they want to combat the dangerous practices of patronage, favouritism, and corruption which threaten our parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this document, which I'm sure all members of the New Democratic caucus are familiar with, *Democratic Reforms*, January, 1991, used to campaign on to reform: no patronage, fair, honest, don't take away any rights, stick up for people, make sure it's an honourable public service. Don't have them out there wondering if they have any rights or no rights or half-rights, no recourse to the legal community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a whitewash. The democratic reforms of the NDP mean absolutely nothing, just like their farm policy. We heard today in question period . . . they talk about moratoriums on one hand, and they admit that they haven't talked to anybody about them that makes any difference.

And then they sit in here and the Minister of Agriculture hides in the legislature avoiding the media for the third or the fourth time because he's afraid to face them because he doesn't tell it as it is in the country. And he doesn't tell us anything in here. The hypocrisy of it. It's absolute hypocrisy.

Here's the white paper reforms on how you treat the public service. All the good things you say you're going to do and how self-righteous and honourable you're going to be. And then you bring in a Bill that takes away every solitary right that any individual public servant ever had.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's no recourse, there's no recourse at all.

The claim for loss or damage includes any claim . . . And it

just takes away any way that you can get back at defending yourself:

... in damages or debt for unjust dismissal, breach of contract, inducing breach of contract, interference with a contract, mental distress, loss of reputation, defamation or any other cause of action in contract, tort or equity arising from or incidental to the creation, termination or expiration of a Crown employment contract.

There's no rights left. They've taken away every single solitary right of an individual for recourse, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at a time when they said to the public ... And I'm sure they showed their parents and their children and all their colleagues how good they were going to be with this great piece of paper, *Democratic Reforms for the 1990's* that says all the things about how a non-partisan government would operate, and then introduce by a lawyer, attorney general in the province of Saskatchewan, an NDP that said, here's how we'll treat the public service. Here's how we'll shore up the NDP patronage appointments.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that I've made my point. These two documents are going to travel across Saskatchewan and across Canada so you can stand and defend yourselves in the face of the hypocrisy of promising this and then delivering this ... And won't even take the time to consider the amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which says, take it to the courts. Allow the people to pursue it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I certainly will stand in my place and support the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 3:14 p.m. until 3:20 p.m.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 9

Devine	Martens
Muirhead	Britton
Neudorf	Goohsen
Swenson	D'Autremont
Boyd	

Nays — 34

Van Mulligen	Bradley
Wiens	Lorje
Simard	Lyons
Tchorzewski	Lautermilch
Lingenfelter	Calvert
Teichrob	Hamilton
Koskie	Johnson
Shillington	Trew
Anguish	Scott
Goulet	McPherson
Solomon	Kujawa
Kowalsky	Crofford
Carson	Knezacek
Mitchell	Harper

Penner	Renaud
Cunningham	Langford
Hagel	Jess

The division bells rang from 3:24 p.m. until 4:25 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 29

Van Mulligen	Bradley
Wiens	Lautermilch
Tchorzewski	Calvert
Lingenfelter	Hamilton
Teichrob	Johnson
Koskie	Trew
Shillington	Scott
Anguish	McPherson
Goulet	Kujawa
Kowalsky	Crofford
Carson	Harper
Mitchell	Renaud
Penner	Langford
Cunningham	Jess
Hagel	

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.

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like it recorded that I am declining to vote because I'm declaring a pecuniary interest pursuant to rule 37.

The Speaker: — I'm informed that we do not record abstentions, but *Hansard* will of course record your explanation.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 15 — An Act to amend The Municipal Board Act

Clause 1

The Chair: — Will the minister please introduce her officials?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to introduce Dave Innes, the deputy minister of Community Services.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Chairman, I had a couple of questions on this that I'd like answered please. Who is it that's going to be making the appointments then to the municipal board?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Cabinet.

Mr. Boyd: — Why does the Executive Council want control of these boards? Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister,

why does the Executive Council want control of these boards?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Chairman, this is no change. The Lieutenant Governor in Council has always made appointments to these boards.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Chairman, that isn't really, I don't think, the proper answer to it. We wanted to know why they want control of the boards. In the past it was a quasi-judicial type board and independent. Now we're wondering why the Executive Council feels that they have to have more direct control than they had in the past.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — If the question is why does the cabinet want to be able to control the size of the board . . . is that the question? What we're intending to do is try to limit expenditures here, and the only way we can do that is by controlling the number who sit on the board. We're looking at the financial situation. And hopefully, we can look at reducing the budget somewhat by decreasing the number who sit on the board.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Chairman, no, I don't think that was what I had in mind. It's our understanding that the boards have been independent in the past and that we're wondering in the future if this Bill passes as you would like it to, our thoughts are that if the board members do not agree with the direction that — or pardon me, the Executive Council — does not agree with the direction the board members are taking that you will dismiss them. Is that the rationale?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — No, that's not the rationale. The board will be independent like it was in the past. There is a budget implication here and we're only looking at the budget implication.

Mr. Boyd: — Well we're not sure that we agree with that interpretation of it. The way it worked before was they were independent, and why can't it remain that way?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — They will remain independent. It is not the intention of this government to interfere with the work of the board at all.

Mr. Boyd: — Madam Minister, what criteria then will you use for the cutting down on the number of board members?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Well obviously, as you would know, that this government is facing some very severe financial crisis. And we intend . . . if the work-load is reduced, we would like to have the ability to reduce the number who sit on that board as well.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Chairman, I think the question though was what criteria do you . . . will you determine the number of board members?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Obviously the budget is going to set to a large extent the criteria that we use. In consultation with the chairman and understanding the number of appeals and the amount of work coming from municipal governments, we will be able to decide how many people should sit on that board and what their work-load will be.

But it will be through consultation with the chairman as well.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A question for Madam Minister: what is the minimum size you envisage for these boards?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — The statutory minimum is three. We envision somewhere between four or six. We are hoping that we can save . . . As you know \$60,000 per annum is the wage, and we're hoping to save at least one, perhaps two.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, you're saying then that six would be your maximum. Do you have a maximum in mind then, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — As you know there is no maximum. There has never been, it has been open-ended. I would expect as work-loads increase or decrease we would have the ability to increase or decrease the number who sit on the board.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, if you were to decrease the board levels down to the minimum of three or four that you have in mind, how long would you allow them to remain at that level?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — How long of a term would we appoint them for, or how long would they be required to sit on the board? I guess it depends on the work-load and on the budget.

As you know we are looking at trying to economize this government and make sure that it runs efficiently. So depending on the work-load that comes from year to year and depending on the budget we'll decide how many people should be sitting on it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, my concern on this issue is that as my colleague pointed out . . . the Executive Council disagrees with the direction the board is taking. You drop them down to your minimum level of three to four at some point and then you fill it back up again. That is my concern. Can you assure me that will not indeed happen?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Chairman, really there would be no need for the provincial government to intervene or to get involved in the work of the board. I can't envision any situation where the provincial government would choose to look at what the board is doing and to make any kind of interventionist action. So this is primarily motivated by the need to look at the board and to make sure that the budget reflects the work-load of the board and that's all.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, will the representatives on the board represent all of the sectors involved?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Yes, that's a good point. Actually all sectors will be represented. Our course of action will be to make sure that every one who sits on that board has qualifications that will allow them to perform their job function in a competent manner. So we're going to be looking at some very stringent qualifications in regard to

municipal finance, in regard to municipal law, and in regard to such things as assessment — past experience in assessment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, would you be willing to table those qualifications in this House?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — We will be, as the Bill is passed, there will be qualifications that will be tabled at the point as the qualifications are developed.

I would make one more statement that if there are openings on that board they will be advertised across Saskatchewan, and anybody with qualifications that meet the criteria set out in the regulations will be interviewed as a prospective person to sit on the board.

So these openings will be . . . if there are openings, they will be advertised publicly.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, what kind of a time frame are we looking at for the development and tabling of those qualifications?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — The regulations should be brought in by the end of January, considering that we have a holiday right now. But they are being thought about and by the end of January those regulations should be in place.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, if by chance on some wonderful occurrence this House is no longer sitting at that time, will you send a copy of those to me, please?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Yes, I certainly will. Thank you.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. How many members are there currently on the board today?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Six, including the chairman.

Mr. Boyd: — And, Mr. Chairman, how many subcommittee members are there?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — If you're talking about the planning appeals subcommittee, there is probably what? — 17 or 20 sitting on as part-time members on the assessment appeals committee. But there are six full-time board members and a long list of Assessment Appeal Board members that probably will no longer sit because the qualifications on the board will enable the people sitting on the board to have better experience and assessment. And they can do the major part of that work.

Mr. Boyd: — Are the new members that you intend to appoint to the board, will they be 10-year appointments?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Ten year? I would not wish to appoint them for 10 years. I think there will be a limited, probably a three-year appointment subject to review. But I can't foresee a 10-year appointment. I think that's too long.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is the minister saying then that these regulations will come in

after she has terminated Larry Birkbeck and Wilma Staff or will we get these regulations beforehand?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — I don't understand why you would assume why anybody would be terminated in particular.

Mr. Swenson: — Madam Minister, what you have said is that this board for budgetary reasons is going to be dropped down to three members; that the independence that this board had with 10-year appointments no longer applies; that Executive Council will review these people on an ongoing basis. And I can only judge from past history of what I've seen in this House in the last three weeks that you will probably terminate Wilma Staff and Larry Birkbeck. I just want to know if you're going to bring those regulations beforehand or afterwards.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Are you assuming that those people aren't qualified? I don't know if they're qualified or not. Until we see their qualifications we can't say whether they'll sit on the board or not.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not saying they weren't qualified at all. I'm saying they're on the board. The member has said she is dropping the board down to three members and then she's going to rebuild it; that these new members will be subject to dismissal at any time by Executive Council; that they are going to have short-term appointments. I just want to know if the minister is going to do these things in full view of the public and that there is going to be ample reason.

I ask simply, is she going to table these new regulations before any terminations take place. That's a very simple answer, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — I'm not making any comment on any of the qualifications of the people who sit on the board now. There are six people on the board. We intend to develop the regulations. They'll be made public at the end of January.

Mr. Swenson: — Once more, Mr. Chairman. The question was very simple. Will the minister assure the House that the new regulations as to hiring and qualifications will be tabled with the House before any terminations take place? Simple question, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — I have no problem in that.

(1645)

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, did I hear or understand you correctly when you indicated that the sub-committees were going to be reduced, that you're going to have less of them and fewer people there? Are you going to reduce the different sections in them relating to the hospitals and to the schools and to other areas? Are you going to reduce them?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Are you talking about the planning appeals sub-committee, or are you talking about . . . Every sector will be represented on the Municipal Board. If you're talking about hospitals or you're talking about school boards or you're talking about municipal government, there will be representation from those

sectors on the Municipal Board.

If you're talking about the Planning Appeals Board, which I suppose could be interpreted as a sub-committee, that committee probably, which only sits part time now, will probably have no function because the Planning Appeals will be taken up with the Municipal Board because the Municipal Board will have expertise in assessment.

Mr. Martens: — It's my understanding, Madam Minister, that the school trustees association has representation or has had representation on some of these planning committees or parts of the subcommittees of the Municipal Board. And I just want to know whether they're going to be relieved of their responsibilities too.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Apparently if those people don't sit on the Municipal Board now, as they're no people with qualifications representing school boards on the planning . . . at the Municipal Board now. So I'm not sure; if you feel that should be changed, then it could be looked at.

As far as the Assessment Appeal Board, as I said before, we feel that people qualified in assessment should be sitting on the Municipal Board. And so that's an area of expertise that we're going to be looking at.

I want to correct one impression I may have left. The regulations will be made public. I guess I'm not familiar if the House has to sit when you say tabled in the House. The list of qualifications will be made public for you before any changes will be made.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, I just want a clarification on the questions I had earlier. You were going to send me a copy of the qualifications as well as the regulations?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — The regulations are the qualifications, yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — The qualifications will be spelled out in the regulations that you'll be drafting.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Chairman, the member just made a commitment which she now has qualified; the minister has now qualified it. One of the amendments that the Minister of Finance said would be looked at seriously was the tabling of documents in this House at any time, whether in session or intersessionally, and that the Public Accounts Committee would be able to deal with that amendment.

What I specifically asked the minister is, before any terminations take place, that those rules and regulations be tabled in this Assembly. And I took the tenor from the Minister of Finance that he was quite willing to look at that procedure, Mr. Chairman, and I think that in the spirit of what was said on that particular amendment, that the minister should be prepared to table before any terminations take place.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — I probably wasn't familiar with the way the regulations are developed. Regulations are made public as they are developed. They're order in council, and they will be made public. And as they are made

public there will be changes made on the board.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Speaker, I think the minister should know that tabling of a document with the Assembly means it is public. But I think it is right and proper, as was discussed in the amendment, for the benefit of members of this legislature, that those documents be tabled with the Assembly and not simply released at the whim of the minister in the manner which the minister wants to.

That is the whole essence of that particular amendment with the Public Accounts Committee, and I heard the Minister of Finance, the Deputy Premier, say that it was right and reasonable. And I ask the minister again, before any terminations take place, will she table those rules and regulations with the Assembly?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Chairman, we'll follow the regular procedure with the regulations. They will be made public and we will not make any changes on the board until the regulations are made public.

Mr. Swenson: — Madam Minister, does that concur with what your Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier said in this Assembly?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — I don't believe that regulations have always been regarded as the . . . in the same procedure as other parts of legislation and other public documents. But I'll have to wait and see. I'm sorry.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 11 — An Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act (No. 2)

Clause 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that this Bill is introduced basically retroactively. And my impression is that this is a one-time Bill, that it was intended just to cover this particular year. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — That's correct. The last minister of Finance brought this amendment in, and we are simply passing the amendment from the last government's minister of Finance.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Does that mean then that for next year we would go back to the old formula, and that there would not be a reduction for next year?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — First of all, we are intending to set up a task force with the local governments to look at the whole idea of formula. I might remind you that the formula has not been applied since about 1983. So that formula has not been in use anyway, and we feel that it is time, in response to what SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) has been saying for some time, to develop a new formula and we'll be sitting down with them, consulting with them, and bringing in a new

formula.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well maybe I'm off base, Madam Minister, but it seems to me that a formula means that you have something that you use as a base and then you refer to that in percentages to come up with the formula for each individual year. And if that's the case, then going back to 100 per cent of the old formula means you go back to the same thing as you had before. And that's all I was asking, is whether or not you're going to allow next year's funding to be the same as it always was, at 100 per cent.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Chairman, the last government has never used the formula. To go back to the formula would be going back to 1982 when the last NDP government was in. And perhaps he isn't aware of that but through various ministers of Community Services and Finance they have disregarded that formula for nine years.

We intend to set up a new committee to structure a new formula that will take into account this financial situation, both at the local government and this provincial government, and we will be developing that sometime before the next budget is brought down.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Chairman, I address my question to the Madam Minister again. For this year basically you've said that we're going to clean up with about a 16 per cent reduction to rural municipalities and about a 7 per cent reduction for urban municipalities. And my question is, for next year will we be going back to the 1989-1990 fiscal year at 100 per cent?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Are you asking if we will have the same levels of funding as we did in 1989-90? I cannot give you that guarantee. It will depend on the way the budgeting process takes place and the financial situation of the province.

I can guarantee you though that we will protect the interests of local governments, unlike the last government.

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Chairman, it appears to me that at least we have the comfort of knowing that we can't possibly have a reduction from that statement of any more than 16 per cent or 7 per cent. We have to obviously have something at least better than that for next year. And we appreciate that.

I wonder, Madam Minister, in the event that considering that we've had tax collections lower this year in some municipalities than has happened before, do you have any contingency plan for helping those people through the winter months that may not have the cash to be able to keep roads open and that sort of thing, so that the school buses can continue to run in the province?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — We are aware of the financial straits of local governments, both urban and rural, and it has been happening for nine years. And if you look at the past history, you will find out that the past government has

neglected woefully the financial interests of local governments.

I cannot guarantee that we will continue any funding until we look at the financial situation of this province. So I want to make that clear. This is not our budget we're talking about. When we're preparing our budget, I'm quite prepared to talk about the funding that we will be bringing in in our 1992-93 budget.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To Madam Minister, that sounds to me like a cop-out. I'm wondering if you could be a little bit more specific when you say that the amount of revenue available will depend upon the financial picture of the province and what the review is going to show. Could you be a little bit more specific on behalf of these boards out there?

If our projected deficit of \$250 million is proven to be accurate, does this mean then that they can expect a 10 per cent increase in revenue, a 5 per cent increase or a zero per cent increase?

And your inflated, exaggerated deficit proves to be what they come down with — 888 or the 950 million — does this mean that there's going to be a substantial decrease? Could you be a little bit more specific as to what you're talking about?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Chairman, the last member from Melfort stood here and said this province was virtually bankrupt, and he was right. And I'm not going to make any commitment on next year's budget until we have had a financial review of this province and decide how much money we have to spend. Local government realize you cannot spend money you don't have.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, specifically, if the deficit is going to be correct at \$250 million, how much money will you have to spend?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — I don't know how much money we're going to have to spend. And we don't anticipate there's going to be \$250 million deficit. We've already said it's \$1 billion.

The Chair: — Order. Order. Order. I see the members engaging in a discussion of funding levels for some future year, and I would remind members that the item before us is an Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act which deals with expenditures for this fiscal year. I just encourage for you to bear that in mind.

Mr. Neudorf: — In response to your last response, if it is \$1 billion, how much will we have to spend?

Hon. Ms. Carson: — We haven't developed our budget in municipal finance yet. This has nothing to do with this Act that is in effect putting into action what the last government said in their budget, which was a decrease to municipal governments. This is not an action we would have taken had we been here. This is your action — you take the responsibility for it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Order. It being 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed until 7 o'clock p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.