

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce some people to you today, not actually in my capacity as the member for Regina Churchill Downs — these are not students — but in my capacity as the member responsible to the Legislative Assembly for the Public Service Commission.

A program was begun some time ago of bringing groups of public servants on a periodic basis to the Assembly so that they might understand, better understand, what we do, or attempt to do, here. Thus today we have 25 public servants who work in Social Services, in Justice, in Energy and Mines, in Agriculture and Food.

I know all members will want to join in sending a particularly hearty welcome to these people who serve us and the public.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you 16 grade 3 and 4 students from the Kawacatoose School situated in the west gallery. With them today is their teacher, Sylvia Nagy. I look forward to meeting with them after question period for photos and so forth, and I ask the members to please make them welcome here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today actually it is my pleasure to introduce some students from a school that actually is represented by the Hon. Bob Mitchell. Unfortunately he is not available today, but I feel it's a great privilege to be able to stand in for him because this is an area of the city that I used to represent while I was on Saskatoon City Council. Today seated in the Speaker's gallery are some 49 students from Confederation Park School, as well as some students from the John Dolan School. They are accompanied by their teachers Nora Sutherland and Ford Mantyka and by Mr. Ash.

And there's one very special student here today that I would like to particularly draw the Assembly's attention to, and that is Buffy Ash who is present here today on the House floor. I would ask everyone to join me in welcoming them, and I will be meeting them later for drinks and pictures.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I would like to you and through you to all members of the House introduce 40 grade 4 and 5 students from William Grayson School in Moose Jaw. Mr. Speaker, they're seated here in the east gallery. I had the enjoyable treat of having lunch with the students from William Grayson. We had our photo taken, and they had some very good questions for the member

from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Today the students from William Grayson are accompanied by their teachers Ms. Barbier, Ms. Turcotte and Ms. Hicks. I hope they have enjoyed their tour of the legislature and wish them a good and safe trip home.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all I'd like to join my colleague the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow in welcoming the William Grayson students. Up until the change in boundaries, Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure to introduce them to this Assembly, and my loss has been the gain of the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

However, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you seven grade 12 students who are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are from Vanier Collegiate and are here today with their instructor Ruth Schneider.

Mr. Speaker, there is something of particular interest to members in the Assembly, in that I think Vanier Collegiate is unique in the province, in that for the last three years they have had a student citizenship affirmation, a reaffirmation program for their grade 12 students, and something that I think many of us here would find to be highly desirable, and we compliment them for that practice.

Mr. Speaker, they have been on tour and I look forward to meeting them following question period for refreshments and discussion. I would ask all members to welcome them here and to wish them every success in their grade 12 studies this year and in their careers to follow.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

SaskTel Rate Increases

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, SaskTel has made 51 million in profits and had retained earnings of \$40 million — or \$91 million that the corporation has in its kitty. Mr. Premier, your excuses for grabbing the people's money through massive and, I must say, very deceptive rate increases in the telephone utility, was also that the money was needed to keep SaskTel financially sound.

Mr. Premier, are you telling this Assembly that you believe 51 million in profits and 40 million in retained earnings is not financially sound? Is that your position?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, two points. One of them is that the increase was modest, at about the rate of inflation. The other comment I would make to the members opposite is that their administration left the Crown corporations as a whole in really desperate ... in desperate straits.

As you will recall from the budget which was given a few days ago, the taxpayer actually has to pay part of the interest for the Crown corporations because, as a whole, they are unable to meet their interest payments. Thus the extent to which SaskTel or any other Crown corporation can turn a profit, helps to carry the freight for the Crown corporations which can. And if you want me to list the Crown corporations which aren't able to pay their own way, I'd be delighted to do so because it is a litany of trouble and debt which your administration left us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, for the same minister. The people expected more from you. I am convinced that you really do not understand the impact these rate changes are having on the province.

Mr. Minister, I'm going to relate to you a true story that happened in my constituency so you may understand the impact. A small business was in the process of being established in a very small community. The family involved had priced out the cost of installing the telephone into that business. The cost would have been approximately \$200. The cost after those rate increases was \$2,000.

Mr. Minister, is that a modest increase?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The increases which were taken by the Crown corporations were done in response to the inordinate, and I may add, unbearable debt load being borne by the Crown corporations. The administration of which the members in the front row were a part of left the Crown corporations with a debt they simply couldn't manage.

What we are attempting to do as best we can is have the Crown corporations, as a group, carry their own weight.

The Speaker: — Order. If the members wish to have their questions answered, then I think we should allow the ministers to answer those questions with the least of interruptions.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'll just conclude very quickly by saying these increases were necessitated in large part because of the abominable conditions in which you left the Crown corporations, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. Mr. Minister, the rate increases were imposed on the people of Saskatchewan without first presenting a resolution to this House concerning those rate increases. Mr. Minister, I think we will be able to convince you that the legislative approval for such rate increases will be necessary because I think you will be hearing from the public about this.

But I want to ask you, Mr. Minister, since \$91 million is not enough and since your government has decided to bloat the deficit with massive interest charges from CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) —

interest charges that could have been serviced with this money — it's not true that it is your . . . is it not true that is your intention to . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Could I call the Government House Leader to order please?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe in question period it's the opposition's right to ask . . .

The Speaker: — If the member has a question, let him put his question without any other comments.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is it not true that your intention to simply build an election fund over the next four years to buy the next election?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Members opposite may have run the Crown corporations in a fashion which bordered on fraud. It is not the intention of this government to run the Crown corporations in such a fashion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, we see SaskTel retaining \$40 million of earnings that could be turned over to the public accounts. Mr. Speaker, the government is instructing their Crown corporations to act like vampires in the night. They're sucking the very life blood out of Saskatchewan people and businesses.

Mr. Minister, again I ask you: is it your intention to build retained earnings in SaskTel and to generate very little profit? Is it your intention to then release those retained earnings just prior to an election, thereby trying to position your party to make lavish election promises to buy an election?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It is our goal to attempt to restore the Crown corporations to a degree of fiscal health which will enable them to once again contribute to the economic development of this province. That's our goal and we think we have a reasonable opportunity of recovering from the mess in which your administration left the Crown corporations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, one last question for the minister. If it's not your intention to use the money for election goodies and you've already decided not to use the money to service CIC debt, and you've already decided not to pay the money to the taxpayers through a dividend to the Consolidated Fund, what, Mr. Minister, are you intending to do with this money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, this might be a more useful question period if the member opposite were able to table his supplementaries to my answers. He is obviously reading his supplementaries without ever

having heard or at least considered the answers which I've given you.

I have said to the member opposite, we are attempting to restore the Crown corporations to a degree of health which will enable them to at least pay their own debt if not contribute to the economic development in the province. At the moment we can't do that. There are some healthy Crown corporations, but you left an inordinate number of messes which we are cleaning up.

That is the answer to your first, second, third, and fourth questions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Rate Increases

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the minister responsible for SaskPower. Mr. Minister, yesterday you tabled the corporation's annual report which showed a profit of \$118 million and return earnings of \$155 million. Together, Mr. Speaker, that amounts to \$273 million, yet when you announced rate increases early this year, you said it was necessary to maintain the corporation's profitability in the light of inflation.

Mr. Minister, given the excellent performance of this corporation, how can you justify this obvious tax grab?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as my colleague has indicated, the profits, the net income from the Crown corporations, obviously is used for a number of things, not the least of which — if you turn to page 13 of the annual report — is the \$1.1 billion in debt that the Crown corporation has. And when you look at a profit around \$100 million, the net profit for \$100 million in a Crown corporation of this size, obviously it's not unique or . . . (inaudible) . . . The idea of profit for the members opposite would be a novel idea, having run the province to debt of \$15 billion.

But I want to say to you, to the members opposite, that the idea of having some retained earnings, that having some retained earnings and not ripping it off to be used for your fancy projects like Rafferty and Alameda, I tell you to have some money in the bank for the next project that you want to do may be a novel idea for the former premier . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister is certainly skilled at step dancing and political rhetoric, and I would say the antics today, Mr. Speaker, would qualify him for Hollywood material.

I have a new question to the minister. Mr. Minister, in announcing the rate increases in your February 5 news release, you said: SaskPower tax increases was because — and I quote — we must take steps to protect the fiscal position of the utility. That's the end of the quote.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Okay, Mr. Speaker, I ask you, with \$118 million in profits, \$155 million in retained earnings, clearly the fiscal position of SaskPower was secure without these increases. Mr. Speaker, the question to the minister is simply this. I ask you: what level of profits and retained earnings do you demand from the farmers, small business, and the householders of this province before you deem SaskPower to be in a fiscal secure position? How much are you going to take from the people of Saskatchewan before you claim it is fiscally responsible, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear, as I did when the rates were announced I believe in February, that our government believes in very small, regular rate increases as opposed to what has happened in the past where you have a freeze the year before the election and then massive increases after the election. We're not intending to do that.

But I want to say to the members opposite that over the next 10 years the corporation has planned about \$3 billion in expansion to meet the power needs of the province. And in the sense that we don't want to borrow all the money, which has been the pattern of the previous government, that having some net income is very, very important. And to have regular rate increases comes as a surprise to no one except for members opposite who want to continue the ever increasing mountain of debt and not paying for their bills as they go. We're not doing that any more.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe the minister is capable of answering. He just simply refuses to answer.

I have a question to the same minister. Mr. Minister, it's abundantly clear that you are playing games with the people. And, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that it's a very dangerous game you're playing. Business cannot avoid paying their power bills, neither can farmers or families. Mr. Minister, these are fixed costs, these are fixed costs and they filter destructively down through the economy. Mr. Minister, it's clear to us that you do not care, you don't care what effect your policies have on the people. The question I have for you, sir, I want to ask you: what precisely do you intend to do with these profits and retained earnings? What are you going to do with them?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well, Mr. Speaker, a novel idea to the member opposite is to pay for some of the debt that you've racked up over the past 10 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member raises the issue of the confidence of the people in Saskatchewan and how this is very hard on business people and on residents in the province. And it's true that

any rate increases can be problematic.

But I want to refer to something else that is even more impressive, and that is, is that the major problem facing Saskatchewan is the debt. Since the election there has been a renewed confidence in the province of Saskatchewan as indicated by today's *Leader-Post*. The title of the story is: "Sales of homes go up quickly." And it says . . . yes, let's see what it says.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the two cities in Saskatchewan, in Canada, that lead the way against all the trends across Canada are Regina and Saskatoon. And the increase in Saskatoon — I'll use that for the member from Estevan who has a hard time getting his mind around the issue — it's up by 23 per cent, up by 23 per cent while the Canadian . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Let me remind the Leader of the Opposition that if he has a question this is question period and he should get up and ask a question. Otherwise I ask him not to interrupt, continually interrupt, when the ministers are trying to answer. I recognize the minister; shortly.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the numbers in Saskatchewan are that housing starts are up significantly, that real estate numbers are up significantly as a result of the commitment of this government to do something about the \$15 billion in debt that the member from Estevan should be taking personal responsibility for but has refused to do it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This might be the final question, depending on the answer. Mr. Minister, I understood you to say that you would be using that money for debt reduction. We will be watching you closely to make sure that you do that.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing I would like to say is I sincerely wish that the ministers over there would realize you're not speaking to an NDP (New Democratic Party) convention here. You are supposed to be accountable to this Assembly in your answers.

Mr. Minister, will you not now agree that the government could have used the profits and retained earnings from SaskPower to service a great deal of the debt in CIC, and avoid bloating the government's debt with the entire range of huge write-offs? Will you agree to that, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, one thing I'll guarantee the members opposite, that we're not going to go through the phoney exercise of shifting debt out of the SaskPower Corporation to another corporation the way you did when you hived off SaskEnergy and shifted about \$226 million of debt.

Mr. Speaker, if I could have the member from Estevan's attention. He hollers from his seat to the point where . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I think that's the job of the Speaker to have, to . . . (inaudible) . . . order in the House. If the minister wishes to answer, he can answer; otherwise I'll call another question.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the role of this government will be to try to get rid of the mountain of debt, \$15 billion, that the member from Estevan has racked up and left to the people of this province, a legacy of thousands of dollars per person in the province of Saskatchewan. And not one word from him about why or how or why he left the province in this situation. He just continues to sit and holler from his seat. And I say that . . .

The Speaker: — Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Corporation Profits

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question will be to the Premier or to the Minister of Finance or to the minister in charge of most of the Crowns, and it is their response to this huge profit and retained earnings and now rate increases that add up to hundreds of millions of dollars — and I'm just summarizing question period, Mr. Speaker.

SaskPower has a profit of 118 million, retained earnings of 155; SaskTel has a \$50 million profit and retained earnings of 40 million; SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) has a \$15 million profit for a combination of \$375 million. Plus, Mr. Speaker, the media knows and the public knows you're going to have rate increases on top of that.

So the previous administration, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I'm going to have to ask the member that he must put a question. If you have a . . . I'm asking the member to put his question.

Mr. Devine: — My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, we improved the debt/equity ratio in the Crown corporations — we on this side of the House — so that in fact, Mr. Speaker, so that in fact you could make a profit. The profit from these Crown corporations are the result of our administration. Right, this is 1991-92. And on top of that there is retained earnings of almost \$400 million because of our administration. Why, Mr. Premier, are you having rate increases for the public when we brought in almost \$400 million in profits and retained earnings in the last year of our administration?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Even with the legendary ability of the member from Estevan for self-deception, I am surprised that you believe that you improved the debt/equity relationship of the Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that the Crown corporations, taken as a whole, are unable to pay their interest on their own debt. The taxpayers got to do it for

them. These increases are as a result of 10 years of the worst mismanagement in recent Canadian history. And that's where the rate increases come from. You need look no further than the people behind you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — If the Premier won't respond to this, I'll just ask the minister again. This profit and retained earnings of almost \$400 million is a result of our last year of our administration. Now if the debt/equity ratio was so bad, how can you run up all that profit and all that retained earnings?

My question to you is, is not that true? And secondly, why would you ask the public for 30 per cent rate increases on these major Crown corporations when you have this kind of profit and this kind of retained earnings?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to enter into this question period very briefly to give the former premier the answer which was given to the legislature early in December of 1991 when Deloitte & Touche did an independent accounting opinion on Crown Management Board financing and said, and I quote the following:

The documents presented to the CMB Board of Directors indicate that the management of CMB believed that the corporation did not have the financial (capacity) to pay the dividend of \$310 million dollars and that CMB's present financial situation would deteriorate by this payment because of the assumption by CMB of additional interest bearing debt. In fact, management . . . (listen to this, Mr. Speaker) In fact, management recommended that the Board not approve the payment by CMB of the \$310 million dollar dividend.

The documents further state that the payment of this dividend would ultimately lead to (the) situation where CMB will require significant dividends from the Crown Corporations each year just to meet its interest expense. This means that the corporation was anticipated to have little (capacity) to pay dividends to the Heritage Fund in future years.

What has happened . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I'll take the next question. Next question.

Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier another question. In 1982 finance charges as a per cent of revenue for SaskPower were 32 per cent. Last year they were 17.6 per cent. So we cut the interest charges in half for the public of Saskatchewan, and as a result of that the public utilities can make \$400 million in profits and retained earnings.

And on top of that, I ask you, Mr. Premier, if we were able to cut the debt/equity ratio for SaskPower and the interest

expense as opposed to what it was before, almost in half, why do you raise the utility rates up to 30 per cent and hit the farmers and hit the utility people all across the province? Explain that to the public.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Among the things that was criticized by Ernst & Young and by the Gass Commission was the phoney accounting in which you people engaged.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It seems . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Does the Leader of the Opposition want an answer to his question? He can't just sit down and then immediately interrupt. He might not like the answer but you have to accept the answer that the ministers give.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It seems, Mr. Speaker, there are 10 people left in the province who haven't got the accounting methods of the former government straight, and that's the 10 people sitting opposite. Everybody else understands that you used phoney and sometimes accounting that bordered on fraudulent to conceal a mountainous debt.

I say to members opposite, that day has come to an end. This government is going to be open and accountable and honest with the Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, you know the Gass report said that every year books were accounted for. The public information used people like Ernst & Young, and in 1991 I think this is the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and responsible for SaskPower, Ernst & Young's report, and what does it say?

Ernst & Young's report says in 1982 finance charges as a per cent of revenue were 32 per cent. Last year they were 17. So we made a tremendous change from '82 to 1991. And as a result of that, you can now record profits in the utilities and retained earnings, and it's \$375 million.

Mr. Speaker, my question goes back to the Premier, and I quote the newspaper that talked about why the Minister of Finance wouldn't put the money into the central savings departments of this government so that you could approach the deficit of last year. And I quote: the Conservative . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. You have asked your question. Whoever wishes to answer.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The members opposite shuffle debt around from one corporation to another like a card-sharp trying to hide a deuce. You really did. Debt went from one corporation to another to another.

An Hon. Member: — No.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Oh well, the member sanctimoniously says, no. Indeed it did, and it was the

subject of scathing criticism in the Gass Commission and in the Ernst & Young report.

I simply say to the member opposite, the day is gone. From now on, we are going to be open, accountable, and honest with the Saskatchewan public, and they understand that if the 10 members opposite don't.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — With leave, for the introduction of guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to introduce to you and through you to the House a group of 28 students from Rosetown Central High School who are from the grade 8 class there. I welcome them to Regina and to the Assembly and look forward to meeting them for pictures and drinks. And I ask the members to welcome this group to the House.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 15 — An Act to amend The Wills Act

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Wills Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 16 — An Act to amend The Jury Act, 1981

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Jury Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 17 — An Act to amend The Commissioners for Oaths Act

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Commissioners for Oaths Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 18 — An Act to promote Regulatory Reform in Saskatchewan by repealing Certain Obsolete Statutes

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to promote Regulatory Reform in Saskatchewan by repealing Certain Obsolete Statutes.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, pursuant to section 225 of The Election Act, I wish to table the report of the Chief Electoral Officer respecting reimbursements made to registered political parties and candidates.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Appointment of a Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone:

That a Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs be appointed and empowered to examine and inquire into all such matters and things as may be referred to it by this Assembly, and to report from time to time their observations thereon; with the power to send for persons, papers, and records, and to examine witnesses under oath; and that rule 89(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan* be amended by adding the said committee to the list of standing committees of this Assembly; and that the said committee shall continue for the duration of this legislature but shall be subject to membership changes as may be affected from time to time by resolution of the Assembly pursuant to rule 92(1).

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand in this Assembly today and to speak to the motion that has been presented by the Premier or the Government House Leader regarding the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs and the appointment of this committee, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I want to speak for a few moments and address a few concerns that we on this side of the House have with, first of all, the fact that this is going to be . . . we're introducing a standing committee to this House on the constitutional affairs.

I guess the question we will be raising first of all is do we need another committee established in this province or even established by the NDP government. I believe, Mr. Speaker, on October 21, 1991, Saskatchewan people made it clear what they wanted in regard to the constitution. I believe they spoke out very loudly, and they indicated in a plebiscite at that time that they wanted to have input. They wanted the opportunity to approve by referendum or plebiscite any proposed changes to the Canadian constitution or to the Saskatchewan position.

If anything, Mr. Speaker, a special committee should be set up to make recommendations based on the public's desires. And let me just remind the members of this Assembly and just bring to your attention as well, Mr. Speaker, of some of the results of that plebiscite conducted during that vote in October.

Mr. Speaker, of 482,926 votes counted regarding the plebiscite question, fully 383,060 voted in favour of, that being, having a plebiscite or having a referendum question posed regarding the constitutional question that would be delivered by the province; and 99,000 voted against, which is . . . I would indicate a clear indication that people across this province are certainly concerned about their country and certainly concerned about the role our province will play in the establishment of a constitution.

In fact, just a reminder, just to let people know of what some of the people in other . . . To break it down a little bit, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatoon Riversdale, the riding of the Premier, 5,403 voted yes on the plebiscite question; 1,368 voted against. That almost looks like an almost an 80 per cent vote in favour on that question.

In Regina Elphinstone, the riding of the Government House Leader, 6,589 voted in favour of having a referendum or a plebiscite or the opportunity to voice their opinions, Mr. Speaker; 1,774 voted against. There again, an obvious, almost 80 per cent of the voting public that expressed their opinion on election day voted for that opportunity.

Even in my own riding, the results were 5,250 in favour and 1,341 said no. There again, basically, Mr. Speaker, almost 80.59 per cent of the people who voted on the plebiscite question, Mr. Speaker, voted and asked for the opportunity to be able to speak out through a plebiscite or a referendum.

Mr. Speaker, this committee can examine the issues and report back to the legislature and be dissolved. We're suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that rather than being a standing committee, this committee should be a special committee. And why would I suggest we have a special committee rather than a standing committee as it's brought forward in the motion?

The reason, Mr. Speaker, is a standing committee, as I understand it, becomes another ongoing committee of this Assembly and of this legislature, and we would have to question whether it is in the best regards of the province and the best interest of the people of this province that we establish another committee, a committee that would be ongoing, a committee that certainly would be deriving . . . and becoming more costly to the people of Saskatchewan.

What we're suggesting, Mr. Speaker, is we should have a special committee. A special committee would give the committee members an opportunity . . . a special committee with some guidelines as to time frame in which they would address the questions and maybe consult with people and report to this Assembly, thereby, Mr. Speaker, having a definite purpose and plan and reason to exist, as well as being more frugal managers of our public economy.

Mr. Speaker, the resources of this Assembly need not be directed to a full-time standing committee, a standing committee as I indicated earlier which will collect per diem expenses each and every time they meet. In fact

since the election of October 21, 1991, Mr. Speaker, we have seen numerous committees sitting. In fact it seems that there's been an ongoing litany of committees meeting on different questions and issues in this province, and we have a government today talking about fiscal responsibility and I would suggest is establishing more committees. Is that being fiscally responsible? Are we using the taxpayers' money well? Why does this government need a standing committee on constitutional affairs?

Mr. Speaker, we have right here in this building a constitutional unit set up by the NDP. And I would have to ask, Mr. Speaker, what is the role of this committee? What is their role in government? What was the unit, this special unit set up by the NDP, what was it set up for? What are their duties if not to advise this government? If they have already established a committee, doesn't the basis of the committee they've established have the opportunity or the ability to address the issues and the concerns that the government is looking for?

We also, Mr. Speaker, have an intergovernmental affairs office right here in the legislature. And I would ask, Mr. Speaker, do they not play a role in advising the government on issues regarding the constitution? Can the government not have these two offices play a larger public role?

It would appear to me, Mr. Speaker, that we have enough people already involved in constitutional debate right here in this Legislative Assembly; that, given the role or maybe an expanded role, Mr. Speaker, they indeed could address some of the concerns that are not only concerns that the members opposite have regarding the constitution or their desires regarding this constitution or their suggestions as to Saskatchewan's role in the implementation of ratifying the constitutional agreement in Canada, but as well, Mr. Speaker, they probably and could even have a mandate I'm sure to accept responses from people across this province as people in Saskatchewan have indicated their desire to be involved in the constitutional debate here.

(1445)

So can the government not have these two offices work together playing a larger role in public life? Can these offices not conduct public meetings for input, take the time to go and talk to people, or invite input from people right across this province as to how they view the constitution and their view of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the members of this legislature have met for departmental briefings before. Can they not receive the information collected from the constitutional unit and intergovernmental affairs in the form of a briefing? Can this government not then act on recommendations from their own departments? I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that the government certainly will, at least I anticipate that they will be, looking to their departments for some information. And as I've just been indicating, possibly, Mr. Speaker, they could expand the role of those departmental areas and give them the opportunity to speak to people across this province or solicit reports from people.

Mr. Speaker, the current constitutional process has been a long, sometimes painful but none the less important journey for this country. In fact when I think back to prior 1982, and the repatriation of, what I would have to say is a very flawed constitution of that date, pushed forward by the then prime minister of Canada, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and aided very, if you would say, ably by the former premier of this province, Mr. Blakeney, and also the now Premier of this province, then attorney general, Mr. Speaker, it would appear to me that that would have been the time when more discussion, more debate should have taken place. And possibly we wouldn't have the problem that we face today, being dragged into such a strenuous constitutional debate.

Mr. Speaker, when you think about it, when you look back to prior '82 and you ask yourself, well where was the government of the day at that time? Where were they when it came to discussing this issue? Why did they not put pressure on the then prime minister and then federal government of the day to indeed look at a way of repatriating the constitution that would have been agreeable to everyone in this country?

Mr. Speaker, yet they decided to bring back . . . the federal government of the day decided to repatriate a constitution without the support of a good majority of Canadian people. Mr. Speaker, this country is just . . . this is too great a country for us to enter into a fractious debate. Mr. Speaker, this process of consultation has been characterized by the most extensive consultation efforts ever undertaken by any Canadian government.

And I think when we talk about the constitution, we talk about another committee, we just have to look back over the debate since 1982 — almost 10 years basically, I guess it's pretty well 10 years today or this year — there have been many forums that have been established. First we had the Citizens' Forum on the constitution. Next, Mr. Speaker, there was the Beaudoin/Edwards committee on the amending formula. And then we had the Beaudoin/Dobbie review of the federal government's constitutional proposals, then a series of national conferences followed. And now under way and nearing completion is the multilateral process involving the federal government, nine provincial governments, two territorial governments, and leaders of four major aboriginal groups.

It would appear, Mr. Speaker, it would appear to me that we have had continuous and ongoing discussion. We have had opportunity for people across this nation to be involved, people have been invited to be involved. Certainly the federal government has taken the opportunity of inviting — even going out of their way to seek — input from groups and agencies to make sure that they at least voice their opinions publicly through the forums that were placed forward.

And I guess I, like many Canadians too, we tend to sit back and we look to somebody else to raise the concerns, raise the issues we would have. Well, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the ongoing debate we have had . . . and certainly the debate on the constitution is something that is going to probably continue for many years to come.

When I think about our country . . . and there's a copy of the preamble that has been put forward for the constitution, and I'd just like to read it to this Assembly. This is what we as Canadians, I believe, really are:

We are the people of Canada,
drawn from the four winds of the earth,
a privileged people,
citizens of a sovereign state.

Trustees of a vast northern land,
We celebrate its beauty and grandeur.
Aboriginal peoples, immigrants,
French speaking, English speaking,
Canadians all,
we honour our roots and value our diversity.

We affirm that our country
is founded upon principles that
acknowledge the supremacy of God,
the dignity of each person,
the importance of family,
and the value of community.

We recognize that we remain free
only when freedom is founded on
respect for moral and spiritual values,
and the rule of law
in the service of justice.

We cherish this free and united country,
its place within the family of nations,
and accepting the responsibilities privileges bring,
we pledge to strengthen this land
as a home of peace, hope, and goodwill.

Mr. Speaker, certainly men and women of this Assembly, men and women across this province want to see our country strengthened. We want to see not only our province strengthened but we want to see our nation strengthened. And I don't really understand how a standing committee is really going to address all that or just by implementing another committee of the House is going to further the process of indeed strengthening and uniting people.

Mr. Speaker, one has to ask why would we be creating a standing committee? Why not a specific committee or special committee with specific guidelines and specific goals and a role? Can it be, Mr. Speaker, that this committee is being created so that our Premier can have another form of constitutional debate, a forum that maybe he can use to his advantage, maybe.

As one of the government members mentioned yesterday, and speaking to the debate on the health question about politics, certainly when it comes to debate, whether it's in this Assembly or whether it's in the federal Assembly or federal parliament or across this province, politics is going to enter any area or any part of our society where politicians get involved.

And, Mr. Speaker, I realize that the

Premier of this province has a deep interest in our constitution. Mr. Speaker, I believe that's evident in the fact that the Premier was quite involved in debate even back in '82.

But we would suggest . . . we also know that the Premier is still busy, and we wonder, Mr. Speaker, that with all of his involvements if part of the reason for bringing forward or suggesting or bringing the motion forward regarding a standing committee rather than a special select committee, is not to maybe give members of his government, members on his side of the House, another forum debate — giving them another forum where they can feel maybe they're more a part of the parliamentary or the legislative process.

For instance, what about the member from Cumberland? I believe, Mr. Speaker, there are probably many members on that side of the House — and no doubt maybe in 1982 the premier of the day found the same thing — many people who found themselves in the back benches who thought maybe they had a chance for cabinet, who are feeling just a little down and out. And maybe the Premier today is looking for a way of giving his members something just a little more to be involved in so that they could feel that they are part, part of this government.

Mr. Speaker, let me elaborate. The Premier said last week that western wishes have been shoved off the plate during the constitutional negotiations. He warned that talks could end in deadlock if that continues. And yes, there are many questions, there are many concerns that are very important to each and every one of us. Even in our own province we face many concerns. And it would appear to me that there are many people becoming very tired of this debate, the constitutional debate, as it appears, Mr. Speaker, it's a way of trying to deflect the real issues and the concerns that many people face.

Mr. Speaker, what has been at the forefront of the talks; what has been a priority of these talks? Aboriginal issues and concerns? Aboriginal issues and concerns have been taken very seriously. Are we to assume when the Premier states western issues have been shoved off the plate that issues pertaining to aboriginal peoples are of no concern to this province? Is that what the Premier is saying? Is this the case?

How does that make the member from Cumberland feel, knowing that his own leader doesn't feel issues of our aboriginal peoples are western issues? I believe, Mr. Speaker, we have seen . . . and the federal government certainly by opening the door, inviting aboriginal groups to be involved, has really extended a hand to all groups across this nation and certainly the first nations of this country to be involved in the constitutional process. If aboriginals' concerns are not the issue, then whose concerns are they?

Mr. Speaker, I believe now is the time for the NDP to use the constitution for public relations purposes . . . now is not the time. The previous administration had a constitutional committee. Why does this government not refer to this committee's findings?

The people of Saskatchewan have shared their views with a number of committees, both federal and provincial. Will they continue to share their views, or will the standing committee sit amongst themselves and collect

per diems?

I, Mr. Speaker, and members of this Assembly are certainly concerned about our future. We're concerned about Canada's future because we have such a great country to live in. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when we look at Canada and we talk of Canada and just . . . I was at a function last week and talking with the president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, who just returned from a trip to Russia. He was talking about some of the things he had seen in Russia, some of the things he had seen on his trip overseas. And his comment again was, yes, we may have a lot of problems. We may have a lot of divisions. We may have a lot of diversities in this country, but we still have a great country. We still have one of the best nations in the world.

My colleagues are concerned about Canada's future. And, Mr. Speaker, not only are we in this Assembly, people across this province, but as well the lieutenant governor of Saskatchewan, Frederick W. Johnson, is concerned about Canada's future. At a speech in Estevan, hosted by the Estevan Knights of Columbus, Mr. Johnson got up, began his speech, and then decided, because the constitutional issue was at the forefront and was one of the major things . . . issues of the day, decided to speak from the heart as to what he really saw and what he really felt about Canada as a whole.

And, Mr. Speaker, just in talking to a number of people who were at that meeting, they really felt that Mr. Johnson really gave a good, sound deliberation on Canada and what it means to be a Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, yes, we are concerned about our country. And we're not opposed to this committee because we're opposed to national unity. Not in the least. We are opposed to this committee because it is repetitive and expensive, Mr. Speaker.

Have the people of this province told you that they want a standing committee on the constitution? I wonder, did the government of the day ask the people of Saskatchewan whether they want another committee? Do you care if the people of this province want a standing on the constitution? No. It seems the Premier wants to create it to placate his back-benchers into playing.

The federal government provided ample opportunity for Saskatchewan people to share in national dialogue. And note, Mr. Speaker, I said national dialogue, not provincial dialogue. And as I say that, Mr. Speaker, and we are all very well aware of the . . . it seems that every province and every leader across this great nation is dividing or laying out their own turf to address the special needs of their areas.

And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, each and every one of us must learn how to work together, and there is going to be an awful lot of give and take. We're going to have to give and take — everyone from the West to the central Canada to the eastern Canada — in order to arrive at a constitutional format that each and every one of us can feel we are a part of our great country and feel that we can address the needs of the citizens of this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future travelled across the country and listened to the views and suggestions of thousands of Canadians. The Special Joint Committee on a Renewed Canada sought the input and advice of Canadians on 28 specific proposals for constitutional change. Participation in these various forums was not restricted to constitutional experts, politicians, or representatives from special interest groups. Not at all, Mr. Speaker.

Measures were taken to ensure that Canadians from varying backgrounds had the opportunity to participate in the constitutional renewal process because all Canadians — and I reiterate that, Mr. Speaker — all Canadians have a stake in its outcome.

(1500)

Mr. Speaker, I ask you, were all these forums and committees all in vain? Was the province of Saskatchewan ignored, Mr. Speaker? Did we in Saskatchewan not have the opportunity to attend these forums held in our province? I believe we all had a chance, all Canadians had a chance, any interest group had a chance. People from all walks of life had a chance to attend the special committee and the committees put forward by the constitution, the federal government, to address the constitution.

I'm not saying that we should now be shut out, but what I am saying is that it is now time for the Saskatchewan government to start governing. Why do we have to have another committee, another committee to hold more public hearings in the province of Saskatchewan?

If we can have a committee on the constitution, why don't we have a committee to address hearings and address the concerns of people across this province to the changes made by this government in health care. Maybe we should ask people whether they really want to pay a deductible of \$380 a month. Why don't you hold public hearings on whether diabetics should be taken off of the drug plan?

If we're going to establish a committee for the constitution, Mr. Speaker, the door is open to establish committee or could be open to establish committees on any number of topics in this province. Is this the open and consultative government that people voted for? Did they vote for a government which will pick and choose which issues the public will be consulted on? Of course people didn't. If you're going to consult, consult on health matters as well.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people must pay their bills and carry on with their lives whether there is a constitutional crisis on our hands or not. After that, people have attended hearings on the constitution.

Mr. Speaker, please do not get me wrong. Nothing is more important than the unity of this country. But the people spoke and the people voted. The people voted. And let me reiterate again, to be specific, 383,060 people cast a ballot on the constitution, and what did they say? — 383,000-plus voted yes in favour of an opportunity to vote in a referendum. Yes, they wanted approval by

referendum or plebiscite of any proposed changes to the Canadian constitution.

And how many people voted no? Less than 100,000 — less than a quarter of the population voted against an opportunity to speak out. Mr. Speaker, I believe the people last fall spoke and gave the members of this legislature and gave the government a mandate to give them the opportunity to then vote on the constitutional question. Of course I think maybe we should also warn the public that they should, rather than ask for a plebiscite, should ask for a referendum to be held on constitutional change, if at all possible.

For, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me, and we've all seen in the last ... since this House has come back into session that this government has not given any consideration whatsoever to the three major plebiscite questions. It appears to me that the government has ignored the plebiscite questions before, and they probably will ignore them in the future. After all what did the government do regarding the plebiscite on abortions in which more than two-thirds of the people of Saskatchewan spoke out on the funding of publicly funded abortions?

The matter at hand is whether or not a Standing Committee on the Constitution should be created. I believe the government has the mandate they need to address the questions. Do we need a standing committee? The matter at hand is whether or not a committee should be created that will be with us for the existence of this legislature and beyond, as a standing committee would be.

As I said, if the government were bent on creating a committee, create a special committee, a special committee with specific time lines, Mr. Speaker. A special committee with specific time lines will give the government what they want: higher profile for few of their back-benchers. And it will be at a minimal cost to the taxpayers of this province.

The people elected the NDP to form the government and to govern on October. They elected them with a specific mandate. This mandate included allowing the people to vote on any proposed changes to the constitution. The government's role is to participate in the talks and put forward the best interests of our province. It is not the Saskatchewan government's role to threaten these talks — as it would appear to be indicated by reading the newspapers regarding some of the Premier's comments — to threaten the success of these talks with deadlocks or ultimatums.

Mr. Speaker, legislation has been put in place to permit a federal referendum. We all know that this legislation is just a precautionary measure, but it is in place to ensure that the federal government has every means at its disposal to achieve success in the Canada round. Having the legislation, regardless of what the Premier would have people think, does not mean that a referendum will be held.

But, Mr. Speaker, if a referendum were held, what would it mean to the people of Saskatchewan? If the question was presented to the people of Canada in a referendum

and the people voted in favour, what would it do to this province unless we are at the bargaining table, unless we are speaking out rather than just running with another committee around this province, around and around and another circle again?

If a federal referendum were ever to be held under the proposed legislation, it would not interfere with the right of any province to hold its own referendum. We still in this province would have that opportunity to give the people of Saskatchewan their time to vote and to voice their opinions based on what has been said and the rhetoric and the debate that has taken place over the last number of years. A federal referendum in a parliamentary democracy such as Canada's is a serious step.

Mr. Speaker, does Saskatchewan's Premier agree with referendums or plebiscites? Is he willing to give the people of Saskatchewan a chance to put forward their wishes through a referendum? I would ask him to ask the people, if given a choice, whether they would rather have the opportunity to vote on a referendum or whether they would like a Standing Committee on the Constitution. Just ask them.

Instead of setting up committee after committee under the guise of being consultative, just be consultative. I believe that's what they indicated in the throne speech — that they would be more consultative, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, invite the people, hold public meetings on the constitution organized by the constitutional unit, by the unit that's already in place in this province. Give them the opportunity. Let them put some of their expertise to work and give people in Saskatchewan an opportunity to voice their opinions.

Or allow the intergovernmental affairs office to organize a public forum or public debate on the constitution and then have them report to the committee, have them report to the House, have them report to the government. Don't set up another standing committee at the expense of taxpayers in order for the Premier to have his own constitutional sand-box to play in.

Mr. Speaker, in light of what I have said here today, I move that the motion be amended as follows. Mr. Speaker:

I move, seconded by the member from Morse, that the motion no. 1 be amended as follows:

That the word "Standing" be deleted and replaced with "Special" in all instances, and that those words following the phrase "to report from time to time their observations thereon;" be substituted with the following:

and this special committee make its first report to the Assembly by September 1, 1992 and its final report to the Assembly by October 1, 1992; and that the said committee shall dissolve upon tabling its final report.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Before the member continues, the debate shall continue concurrently.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, I want to point out a number of concerns and observations I have regarding the standing committee that is being brought forward in a motion by the Premier, and I want to just go into that a little bit.

The constitution and its discussion have been a part of an ongoing concern and interest to me through the past years ever since I probably began to be involved in politics, and I want to point out some of the observations that I have made as I take a look at some of the things that have been done.

If we begin in the early '70s, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the discussion on the constitution, the prime minister of the day, the Hon. Pierre Trudeau, made some systematic changes in his role as a prime minister in dealing with involving the provinces and their roles as a part of an overall change in a philosophical way of managing the affairs of the country.

Mr. Speaker, the prime minister of the day changed a lot of things that went on, and one of the things that he changed was that parliament became a part of Canada that the prime minister really had less and less to do with all the time. And I noticed that as a part of his involvement he began to involve the premiers of the various provinces and in that discussion brought about the opportunity for premiers to involve themselves in special interest groups as it related to the context of Canada.

And I'm not sure that that was an asset or a benefit to the people of Canada. I know that discussions are necessary to implement change. I know that discussions need to take place. I want to point out that in his responses to the parliament, he was negative to parliament and with that he brought forward the premiers' conferences and various kinds of responses that they gave him.

And we had special interest groups forming from all across Canada that said, my priority is first. It came from Quebec. It came from the Maritimes. It came from western Canada. And these interest groups, Mr. Speaker, focussed their attention on strictly regional areas, disciplining themselves only in relating to their own specific needs in relation to Canada.

And some ways, Mr. Speaker, those responsibilities were supposed to be borne by members of parliament, to the Parliament of Canada. And I believe that they usurped that responsibility and gave that to the premiers of the various provinces. And through that we have a fragmentation of the parliamentary system.

Mr. Speaker, the prime minister of the day did not involve the Senate as a part of that discussion. He involved only the premiers of the provinces of Canada. And it in some ways was profitable for him, because what he could do is he could manage the politics of it a whole lot better than he could if he managed the politics through the Parliament of Canada. And I think that that was his goal in

doing that.

I want to point out to the Assembly also that there were significant reforms that he made and that dealt with some of the things that we are talking about in this constitutional debate. And those items in this constitution refer to a number of things. The special interest groups, as I said before, in certain areas of the country — one is agriculture in western Canada; one is French in Quebec; one is dealing with French in New Brunswick . . . and all of the context of that dealt with special interest groups. And the Parliament of Canada needed to be involved in that.

And I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, that the prime minister of the day did that. He involved the leaders of the various political parties, who at that time generally were Liberal and NDP, and he involved them in a discussion that did not allow for any opportunity to deal with the benefits that could accrue to having a solid, systematic form of constitutional reform that would have a pattern.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear to me that we need changes in our constitution. If you would have had this constitutional debate going on in the United States, you would have had the constitution bring strength to the country. And in Canada what the discussion on the constitution does, it always seems to tear us apart. And that's one of the things that I find the most difficult to understand about the politics of the Canadian people is the ripping and the grinding and pitting one group against another group that we have in the context of being a Canadian.

(1515)

The United States doesn't do that. What they do is when they come out of a constitutional debate, they come out stronger. And the question we have to ask ourselves: are we going to come out as a Canadian stronger because of this debate, or are we going to weaken our opportunities as it relates to being a Canadian?

Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the people who have begun the parliamentary system in Canada, and I have a great deal of respect for the wisdom that they had in dealing with the make-up of the country. But the evolution of it, we have to be very careful that we don't tear the country apart by the very fabric of who we are, and with the intensity with which we address the concerns that we have.

We have a very serious constitutional discussion and, Mr. Speaker, we always have economics coming into this constitutional debate. Now in dealing with the question of whether that's proper or not proper, I guess is a matter of debate. We need to assess whether it is economically beneficial for us to be discussing the constitution and what impact it will have on each one of us. However as we go into that, we need to make sure that corporately we're better off than we were before. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a part of what we need to do.

I believe that we need to have a time line for the discussion on the constitution in the province of Saskatchewan that is limited to a specific time. Otherwise what we're going to be doing is we're going to be at the

personal discretion of the Premier of this province. We're going to be dealing with it in a helter-skelter basis whenever he chooses to implement that. And I think that it's better to have the opportunity to address it from the perspective of this Assembly, that we conclude some of these discussions; that we say, this is where we're going.

On the Senate, for example, is there an opportunity for us to have an elected Senate, an effective Senate, an equal Senate in the province of Saskatchewan, equal with Ontario or Quebec. Those are the kinds of questions that we need to raise and I believe that we need to raise them. But I think, Mr. Speaker, we need a set time line to deal with that in the context of the constitutional discussion.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the province voted to say that they wanted to be a part of that. They wanted to know at the conclusion of this discussion that they had an opportunity for them to decide. And 80 per cent of the people in this province said they wanted an opportunity to participate in that discussion.

Now the people in this Assembly, and specifically probably the legal people, will say, well they won't understand the legal implications. But, Mr. Speaker, the people in the province of Saskatchewan know and understand a great deal about politics. As a matter of fact, they're probably the most in-tune political people that there are in Canada. And I believe that they are, and I believe that the people in my constituency are.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity for us to deal with this in a concrete, definite way is better for us to deal with it in a special committee with a specific time line and a specific date.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to reaffirm some of the points made by the mover, the member from Moosomin, that it needs a definite plan. It needs a specific time for reporting. It needs a fiscal responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, we have had through this past six or eight months of the NDP being in power, we've had committees running all over — committee doing this and a committee doing that. And you know what, Mr. Speaker, it costs money to run those committees, and that's a specific concern that we on this side of the House have.

We need to have the input from the constitutional unit that was set up by the Premier as a specific focus of attention into this committee, and deal with it in a way that it's going to come to a conclusion and say, this is what we want to have and this is what we're taking back to the people. Now you tell us whether you agree with that. And that opportunity is what the people of this province wanted to have.

Your intergovernmental affairs people should be able to give us some opportunity to give the people of Saskatchewan a view of what the constitution should be about. I haven't even begun to deal with the elements of what we do with the people in this province, with special interest groups, as they relate to natives, as they relate to Metis, as they relate to European Canadians. These are all people that will want to have a specific say in their

responses to the committee.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure as I stand here today and say this to this Assembly, that we need a specific time for this to be accomplished. And the reason I say that is we're going to have a vote, Mr. Speaker, in Quebec this fall. And the reason that we need to understand that that's as significant as a vote taken in Saskatchewan or one taken in Manitoba is that we need to say to the people of Canada we want to support the general philosophy of being a Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, that voice in Quebec is going to be heard. We're not sure today whether it's going to be sovereignty or whether it's going to be part of Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, it would be a sad day if Quebec did decide to leave. It would be a sad day for the people of Canada for their contribution to this country and for their willingness to participate. The majority of them would. However, Mr. Speaker, we need to know that. And this committee needs to have a time line in which to address its opportunity in relation to that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out a number of other things that I think that are important for a time line. We need to have the decision made, and the decision has to do with a number of areas. And I believe they are significant, they are significant enough to mention.

And one of them is that I believe that we need to do this in co-ordination with a vote in Quebec, and I know that opposition members know this also. We need to do this with an election in Canada which is likely going to happen within the next 18 months. And that, Mr. Speaker, is also significant in this whole discussion.

Mr. Speaker, those are important areas that we need to deal with and why we need to have a time line for the people of Saskatchewan to have an opportunity to respond to the questions that we are going to raise as a part of the discussion on the constitution. We have to have some final documents for the people of Saskatchewan to begin to decide whether they really want to participate in that way in the discussion with Canada. And that, Mr. Speaker, is very important.

I want to just say that we can have a government that determines within itself what it's going to do. We can have that in Saskatchewan here. We can stand on this side and say whatever we want. However the people have said what they want.

The interesting thing is that you are staring directly in the face of public opinion, a response that they gave you in the election. They gave you the responsibility of telling them what you want to do and then you asking them for that support. And that, Mr. Speaker, is very important as a part of this discussion. And I think you need to do it within the framework of the times that we have suggested.

Mr. Speaker, there's a whole lot of things that we could say on this issue and I am going to look with interest at what the government members are going to say on this matter as it relates to this amendment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the amendment and have given this some consideration this afternoon. I couldn't agree more that this legislature should have a committee on the constitution. However I wish to discuss two issues of concern and both related to timing.

First, given the crucial nature of the constitutional debate, Mr. Speaker, I question why any committee was not struck in November so that there could be input from Saskatchewan citizens on this extremely important issue which ultimately defines who all of us are as Canadians.

Secondly, I listened to the Premier this weekend act as spokesperson for the western premiers regarding their stand on the constitution and he outlined their bottom line. It makes one question how much value or input there will be from this committee in a concluding kind of way when, indeed, the western premiers seem to have already made up their minds.

It appears that the power of the proposed Standing Committee of the Constitution has already been usurped. And I support the amendment to have a special select committee, which I truly hope will be empowered to make some actual contribution.

In conclusion, people must be included in their democratic process. And to be fully participating in democracy, the people must first listen and become well-informed and then have their voices heard when they speak. I ask that the Constitution Committee be a special select committee with the authority to truly listen to all of the people of our province.

Amendment negated on division.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important that all members of this legislature enter into this debate today. Before us we have a very crucial question, a question put forward by the Premier in designing what relationship this committee, indeed this legislature will have with Saskatchewan people as we discuss the ongoing constitutional question in Canada.

And certainly, Mr. Speaker, it's a question that Saskatchewan people feel very strongly about. So strongly, as my colleague from Moosomin pointed out, that they voted in overwhelming numbers last October. They voted in overwhelming numbers to say to those they have elected to govern them in this province that they want a direct say in what Saskatchewan does ultimately in the constitutional process.

I think, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that we have seen the phenomenon of the Reform Party strengthen in western Canada is that the process that we as Canadians have been following over the last 10 years in regards to our constitution is one that people feel a degree of alienation with. And certainly people around our country and within our province have been fond of finger-pointing at the various failures that have accrued to our constitutional process over that time.

As has been pointed out many times, both in this legislature and indeed across Canada, that the process in 1982 which resulted in the repatriation of our constitution from Great Britain was one that was flawed. Not that, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan or indeed Canadian people were against the idea and the concept of individual Canadians having more rights and freedoms. Not that Canadians as a whole were against our court system playing a stronger role in our daily lives. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, I think amongst those that tabulate the pluses and the minuses for individuality in our country would say that there have been a number of advancements in the lives of individual Canadians.

But the very fact, Mr. Speaker, that that process had one basic flaw in it — and that was that a third of our country ultimately was not included in the final solution — has meant that for the last 10 years in Canada we have had this nagging doubt as to the role of our political leaders, as to the role of our institutions in being able to come to some type of finality that will keep our country together over the next century. And I guess it's achieving that finality, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that has seen so many, particularly in western Canada, take issue with the processes that we've gone through.

(1530)

Certainly the Meech Lake accord and the obvious flaws that were pointed out by people in our society was a process that was really a continuation of the 1982 process whereby the premiers and their select few advisors met behind closed doors, even though in some cases, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did see ratification and indeed it all came down ultimately to one provincial premier as to whether the Meech Lake process would come to some final conclusion.

But the very fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that process was viewed by many to have flaws, because it excluded the average Canadian still from having that final say in how their country will have a shape, a form, a substance, and ultimately what degree of individuality they wish to express in the make-up of that country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think when Saskatchewan people had that first opportunity to express themselves on their inclusion in the process, it's why we saw such large numbers, why we saw so many Saskatchewan people say, I want to play a role.

With that in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker — and I don't think anyone can disregard that result — it ultimately then comes down to this Assembly, the people chosen to sit as representatives from each and every constituency in this province, putting our best foot forward in allowing them that process.

As my two colleagues have pointed out earlier in debate, we find some difficulty in supporting the concept as brought forward by the Premier to have another standing committee of the legislature of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the history of this legislature since 1905 there have been many standing committees,

some of which as you know, sir, have not met for a great long time. I think one of the reasons that perhaps the validity of a standing committee of this legislature that could sort of go on *indefinitely* is that it would not send the proper signal to the people of this province.

Everyone in Canada knows that the days and the weeks shorten as we come to some type of finality. And that is because the province of Quebec have expressed the will to allow their people some type of broad based voice in the make-up of a constitutional process. We have seen the federal Parliament of Canada introduce legislation — referendum legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker — that would do the same thing for the people of Canada.

Now I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as was pointed out by one of my colleagues, that any time politicians enter into this type of process, you will have politics. And I can't help but wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if some of the reason, the *raison d'être* behind the government's motion is not brought about by some degree of pressure from their federal counterparts in Ottawa who obviously have found things that they don't like in the way that the present federal government is conducting the constitutional process.

One of the reasons I think that we in the opposition have said that a special select committee of this legislature, under some very stringent time frames, should be struck to go and meet with our citizenry, is that they will then have the confidence that as the deadlines in other parts of Canada come upon us, that we as Saskatchewan people will have had the opportunity to express ourselves. And that this committee will come to some basis, either through, as we believe, a plebiscite or referendum that all Saskatchewan people can speak in, or at least a basis that our Premier and those gathered around him in this constitutional group that has been put together in this Legislative Building, will go forward into those final negotiations with a true sense of what Saskatchewan people think and feel.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe it would be flawed for our Premier to go into those negotiations, as he did in 1982 as the attorney general of this province, with a mandate to negotiate on behalf of Saskatchewan people without the opportunity for them to express themselves in some broad-based way. The last thing that this province or this country can afford is to have another deal done in the middle of the night in somebody's kitchen.

And I think the Premier fully recognizes that that in today's society would be unacceptable, that the hurry and the need that some people felt was present in 1982, that the deal-making that went on over things like the right to own property, the deal-making that went on in regard to resource ownership in western Canada, that the deal-making that went on as to the various rights and liberties of Canadian people cannot happen again; that the special interest groups cannot have the ability to influence the outcome in 1992 as they did in 1982.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know of only one way that that can happen. And some would argue that it is too final a solution, that it unnecessarily will exclude, that it will exclude those minority groups in our society who have

strong views. But I think what we're talking about here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, ultimately is a consensus among Canadian peoples — English speaking, French speaking, people from the minorities whose mother tongue may not have been French or English. But as we come to that final conclusion that a simple, and we would hope, large majority of Canadians would feel strongly enough about their country that they would express that view in a final referendum.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is with that in mind that I would make an amendment to the main motion in the hopes that the government members would listen to what has been said by all opposition parties in this House and that they would listen to the words of Saskatchewan people last October who voted in overwhelming numbers. And I would therefore move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the member from Maple Creek:

That the words "and that the said committee shall continue for the duration of this legislature but shall be subject to membership changes as may be affected from time to time by resolution of the Assembly, pursuant to rule 92(1)" be deleted and replaced with the following:

"and that no constitutional resolution will be introduced into the Assembly that has not been ratified by the people of Saskatchewan in a general referendum."

I so move.

The Speaker: — Order. I have carefully examined the amendment and I wish to draw to the attention of the members Beauchesne's, paragraph 579, 6th Edition, where Beauchesne says:

An amendment setting forth a proposition dealing with a matter which is foreign to the proposition involved in the main motion is not relevant and cannot be moved.

And number 2:

An amendment may not raise a new question which can only be considered as a distinct motion after proper notice.

I have read the main motion very carefully and in no way is there any reference at all to constitutional resolution. And therefore I find the amendment foreign to the main motion and out of order.

The debate shall continue on the main motion. And I'll have to remind members that the Premier is on his feet and he will be closing debate, and if any members wish to speak they must do so now.

(1545)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure for me to be able to discuss this particular motion before the Assembly today. I had hoped of course to rise to second an amendment but obviously that can't be done, so I will go back to the main motion.

I guess it's a little bit awe inspiring for me to talk about the constitution of our country. It's not very often that a farmer in Saskatchewan would find himself in the midst of such an important debate in the Legislative Assembly. And this is a most amazing thing because we had thought, Mr. Speaker, that this problem would have been solved many years ago and that we would probably not have to be indulging in redoing the same debates over and over, year after year.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the constitution as it was repatriated from Great Britain was, by the very nature of the fact that it was old, bound to be outdated. And it was probably necessary that we would have to consider bringing it up to date into our modern-day world just with the technologies and the changes we've seen over the last few years, it just naturally seems that we would have to review it.

But we seem to be doing more than just reviewing our constitution, Mr. Speaker. We seem to be getting into a situation where we are actually reformulating the direction that our future and our country may go. And that makes it an extremely important issue because, if we were simply adjusting the constitution so that we could live in a modern context, then our general direction would still be going the same way. And that would be quite easy for most of us in our country to accept.

But if we're going to change the constitution in such a way that it redirects the way our nation is going to travel politically and perhaps even morally in issues such as language, which have become so important in this round, things like the aboriginal questions, questions like self-government for certain groups of people, this certainly throws a whole new slant on what a constitution is going to do in the direction we will travel in the future as a nation because it won't be the same as it was before. It'll be different.

And so it's very important that if we strike committees that are going to go out, Mr. Speaker, to discuss things with the people, that we have it clear in our minds what we're trying to achieve with that committee.

I think we have to go back to the plebiscite. I know some folks who would rather forget about that idea, but the reality is that the esteem people have for politicians in our country is dropping. All kinds of polls have been taken, and people have clearly indicated that they're just in a mood where they don't trust politicians very much any more. And probably one of the reasons for that is that we sort of promise people that we're going to go a direction, and then a new administration comes along, and they just dissolve the whole thing.

And what it happens is that people count on certain things happening because the politicians have said that that's what's going to happen. A new administration will come along and completely change that, so the trust of the people is totally destroyed, Mr. Speaker — the trust, not only in one administration, but in all politicians. And I'm sure that most politicians are good and honourable people, and most people basically understand that. But in reality when you talk to folks out in the coffee shops or

around the communities, you get the impression that they sort of put us all in the same bag. And one guy said, shake them all up, it wouldn't matter which one came out the corner; they're all alike anyway.

And obviously that isn't true, but the problem is that we are all being tagged with being the same kind of low-life characters that the media sometimes portrays us in in cartoons. And that's unfortunate because it could be corrected. And it could be corrected with some real, fundamental, easy things to be done, and that would be to live up to the obligations that are set out as we go through our society.

A basic and fundamental thing like honouring a plebiscite that was taken last fall could go a long way to convince people that we are genuinely all interested in doing the right things, and that politicians can be trusted that when the people vote for something, that in fact what they vote for is what they get.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it's important in this day and age that if people vote for something, that they should get it. Because in a democracy the people have the right to decide their own fate even if they're wrong. And they also have the right to stop and say, we were wrong; we want to now change our minds and do something else.

That's what a democracy is about, is to have the ability to be able to change your mind or to do something that you want to do and then change and do something else. You have that option to be able to change directions in where you're going by a majority of the people deciding that that's what they want to do.

I said to myself as we entered this discussion, I wonder what is the motive for setting up a committee that would travel around the province to discuss this matter with our people. And on the surface it would seem it's a good idea because, after all, this is an important issue; it's an extremely important issue. And if the motive then is to genuinely go out and research the problem, to ask people their opinions, that's good. And if it's to go out and educate people, to explain to them what is at stake and what's going to happen, that's also good.

But if the motive is to try to somehow convince the people that we've done enough after it's finished and that we no longer need a plebiscite, that we no longer have to honour our past commitments, then we're wrong.

So it is extremely important that we identify what the motives are for having this committee so that we do it in an honourable fashion, so that we do not destroy the trust of the very people that we are consulting with.

We've seen all kinds of boards and committees go around our province in the last little while. We've had probably more boards and commissions set up than I've ever heard of before. And I hope that they do a lot of good. But they're expensive and they have to be done for the right reason.

I can justify the cost of this kind of manoeuvre in our province if we have clearly identified, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to go out and do it for the right reason, and

follow it up with a plebiscite or a referendum or some kind of a final conclusion that gives the people the confidence that they are being honoured in their request through the plebiscite to have a final say on what is being done in our constitutional moves.

Mr. Speaker, the constitution is so important to us that we must ask our people what is going on in their minds. The other day, just to point out how important the issue of the constitution is, I was in the town of Maple Creek where the horse riders were coming through. They had started out from Victoria and they're riding through the country in honour of our 125th anniversary. They also were honouring in that ride, and trying to bring focus on, a peaceful and proper conclusion to our constitutional issues.

Wouldn't it be a shame, Mr. Speaker, if those folks and all kinds of them like that who are working throughout our province and throughout our country, were to be doing all of this celebrating of 125 years of birthday only to find the country coming to an end?

Wouldn't it be a tragedy if the people that took a flag all the way across our country and through our province, honoured that flag and said all of those great and inspiring words about the greatness of our country, wouldn't it be terrible, Mr. Speaker, if that were all for nothing; if we found ourselves playing politics and playing games that would end up having the very constitution destroyed that keeps our country together?

We've talked a little bit about having to keep a constitution that's updated and modern and new and we have to accept that, I'm sure. But we have to be very careful each time that we open up a constitutional debate, that we don't start to destroy the very fabric of the thing that holds our country together.

It has been suggested, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps the motive is that the government of the day and its leader might be wanting to blackmail Ottawa into coming up with more dollars for our province. And I can see that being used as a tool. I guess in our society we get into politics, it's no different than if you're in business. You try to use whatever you have available at your disposal to get a better deal if you can.

But this is too important an issue. This is the constitution of our country. And to be trying to trade off the very real issues within our constitution for financial gain seems to me to be playing the wrong cards at the wrong time. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have to reconsider that motive. It's important for the farmers of this province to have more money to operate with and I think it's important that people in our social services network have more dollars to have a more respectable standard of living.

I'm sure I'll get no argument that all of the folks who work in our labour force and all through our province in other ways need a better standard of living, or would at least like to have a better standard of living. And certainly they can have that. And certainly there are tools that we can negotiate those needs with our federal counterparts in some way. Certainly there are ways that we can do that

without having to take a chance on gambling the constitution of our country, the very thing that could hold our country together, the very thing that has to be there to hold our country together.

And so I would strongly urge, Mr. Speaker, that as we consider this committee to be struck, that our Premier take that into consideration, that this issue is far too important to be putting dollar and cents values in an attempt of blackmail of our federal counterparts. It's far too important to take a chance on destroying it all for those kinds of things. Those things are important, and we'll get to them. And we will find tools to negotiate and ways of getting our way.

But right now, we have things that concern . . . the Triple E Senate, for example. This is a fundamental issue in the constitutional debate; one that I've heard a long time. And I have to be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, I didn't really at first understand what equal, effective and elected senates would mean to our country. But as I have researched it and studied it and listened to my colleagues, I've come to understand that this is a very basic and fundamental need of western Canada.

Western Canada needs somehow to get the same kind of recognition from our country that Quebec is looking for for things like language and culture. A Triple E Senate is not so important as the status that it has in representing something, that the West uniquely needs to be recognized so that we, as a western people, have something we can say that we got out of the constitution that makes us somewhat distinct as well as others.

Now, Mr. Speaker, much could be said about the costs of this program. Much could be said about the safety and the security and the prosperity of our country and the fair representation that we need within our country. And we could talk about priorities of aboriginal rights, Quebec, and western alienation. And we could talk about the real issues of whether we're going to ask for an educational program or if it's going to be a research program. And we can talk about the timing, as my colleagues have pointed out. And it's all very important.

But I think we have to remember that the fundamental bottom line should be that we lead to a plebiscite so that when the opinions of all have been traded back and forth, we put it to a legal and reasonable conclusion; so that the people will feel that they have truly been included in this debate, that they haven't just been used as pawns or tools in the political benefitting by political parties.

It's important that we discuss things like resource ownership, property rights, provincial jurisdictions, federal jurisdictions and trade interprovincially and internationally. And I would hope that we would take these things all into consideration, Mr. Speaker, because it is all so very important.

But most important of all, as my colleague pointed out a few minutes ago, is the fact that we must not strike a deal in the middle of the night on someone's kitchen table. This time we've got to do it right. This time we've got to do it out in the open, out front, in front of the people, and let them make the final decision with their vote in a

democratic society. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I must tell you that I am somewhat surprised that a relatively, I would have thought, non-controversial resolution of this nature would have sparked the kind of comments which we have heard from the Liberal leader and from the Conservative caucus.

Speaking, first of all, to the main proposition of the Conservative caucus, I wish to point out what I think is a fundamental flaw in their reasoning. They suggest, they state in fact, that somehow if this House adopts a Standing Committee on the Constitution, a Saskatchewan plebiscite or a Saskatchewan referendum is thereby excluded. That is incorrect. The two propositions are not mutually exclusive nor is the acceptance of this motion predicated on any assumption that there will not be or that there will be, for that matter, a plebiscite or referendum in Saskatchewan at some appropriate time.

I'm very aware of what that motion was on October 21. I think it's an important expression of public opinion. It's a tool which a government should consider at the appropriate time, namely when the discussions and the negotiations have either come to a successful conclusion or, heaven forbid, have fallen apart, at which point this legislature, this government, may very well want to consult the public. This motion does not deny this legislature or this government the opportunity of consulting through plebiscite or referendum with respect to the end result of the discussions on negotiations in the constitution.

So the statements which are made, based on the implied assumption — in fact on the part of a couple of the members, the direct assertion — that this was somehow an attempt to avoid public consultation, is erroneous. We are not mutually excluding the options which are taking place here.

Now the second argument that they advance is an argument that says: this shouldn't be a standing committee; it should be some form of a special committee — a special committee with a very limited time frame. I frankly am a little bit surprised at that. The members full well know that even if there is a broadly based package of agreement on constitutional matters — highly unlikely; I think what is likely, if there is any agreement is a short range of items that have been agreed to — there will be other items which will require ongoing discussion, ongoing negotiation, and ongoing consultation with the public. The issue of inherent self-government for aboriginal peoples is possibly a specific example, possibly.

Most of the governments seem to be aiming toward recognizing that principle. Maybe they can move beyond the principle to fleshing out the details of what the concept of self-government specifically means in the constitution. But it's very possible that in fact this will entail further constitutional negotiations. There may be

other items which require this kind of a consideration.

To close the legislative deliberations by bracketing them in the strict confines that the Leader of the Liberal Party and the Conservative caucus would have this legislature do is surely very, very narrow-minded and I think very unrealistic.

These negotiations are going to be ongoing. They'll be ongoing. Who knows how they will play themselves out over the summer months and the fall months. There will have to be a period of reporting, public reporting to a standing committee. There will be an opportunity for the public to be heard through the standing committee.

There will be an opportunity to debate and discuss and to disagree and to agree. This is an act of democracy; this is not an act of exclusion. A standing committee which goes out and meets the public, as this committee very well would have the right to do, is perfectly within the keeping of the legislative traditions.

If there is no deal, the reasons behind that, I think this committee can play an important role in explaining to the public. And similarly if there is a deal, the same function can be fulfilled. There is nothing . . . in fact it is very complementary for the establishment of a standing committee to do this.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, to the members of the House that almost all of the legislatures of Canada have standing committees on constitutional matters. That's not necessarily an argument that we should have one too. I suppose we can say that the army is out of step, but that Johnny is the only one in step — I suppose we could take that position.

But the truth of the matter is, that in those legislatures where there have been standing constitutional committees there has been an informed dialogue and debate and there has been a level of awareness which is commensurate with the importance of the topic. I don't think this is something that the members opposite should fear. I think the members opposite should welcome this opportunity.

The other aspect about the standing committee, I think, is also important to keep in mind. This is a committee on federal-provincial relations. It's not so easy to compartmentalize federal-provincial relations into constitution negotiations only, and separate those from the other plethora of interprovincial relationships which we have.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, this province, this country, has a crisis by virtue of the federal government's persistent and determined effort to shuck its federal government responsibilities and pass it off onto the provinces. The off-loading in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, costs the people of this province \$517 million less revenue this fiscal year, '92-93. We could have, Mr. Speaker, if there had been no change in the federal funding, balanced our budget this year on that 517 million or had other options to use a portion of that either for health care or for education or for a number of other federal-provincial, cost-shared programs to sustain better

the quality of life of which we seek.

Make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker, that fiscal federalism is as important a concept of nation building as is the provision in the peace, order and good government clause. Fiscal equalization of opportunities amongst Canadians is as important as the amending formula is.

In fact, many constitutionalists have advocated the proposition that this has been the glue which has bound this country together. It has given the people in Newfoundland or other parts of the country that have gone through serious difficulties economically the chance to have a standard of living, a provision of services which is more or less commensurate with those of Canadians from sea to sea to sea, as the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) journalists and others of us have commented on.

When a federal government embarks consciously on a program, blind and oblivious to the economic difficulties of the regions by off-loading — as this federal government has done over the last number of years — it delivers a damaging body-blow to the unity of this country, as difficult and as dangerous to the unity of this country as any call for separatism might be, whether the call for separatism is in Quebec or any other part of the country. Make no mistake about that.

And if the members opposite think that we should, as people of this province of Saskatchewan, not raise our voices of concern, that we ought not to look at new ways for equalization or established program financing, to improve the relationships of fiscal federalism — a basic tenet of constitutional history of which I wish the members of the opposition opposite would get some fundamental grasp on — if they don't think that's a part of nation building, then they ought to go back and read MacGregor Dawson, the first year Political Science 101 on Canada. This is in fact an important aspect of what is happening in our country today.

There's another aspect of federalism today which is very damaging. Not only are we not practising fiscal federalism, there is, as some of the members opposite have described I think quite accurately, a new kind of federalism which is the flip side — and complementing fiscal federalism or the lack of it presents also as big a threat — it's competitive federalism, Mr. Speaker. It is federalism where there is a jousting over turf and over territory.

If members opposite don't think that there is lot of work to do, ongoing work to do to eliminate duplication between federal programs and provincial programs, to straighten out which environmental assessment programs should be federally conducted and which should be conducted provincially, to determine how we could harmonize the various fiscal arrangements with their taxation or expenditures, I tell you they are virtually alone.

All the premiers of all political ideologies have taken the posture, and correctly so, that we can spend a lot of time to eliminate competitive federalism and practise that which Lester Pearson has talked about, and which has also been an important glue of this nation, and that is

co-operative federalism.

Fiscal federalism, co-operative federalism — those are corner-stones of nation building, and those are issues which this legislature should be talking about. Those are issues which this province should be talking about. And it is issues which are important and central to this constitutional debate just as much as the provisions of the distinct society or the provisions of Senate reform or the other issues which have been on the table and debated by the premiers and the ministers over the last little while.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the question of a referendum or a plebiscite which the members have raised. I have said in my opening remarks we do not rule out, we do not accept. You have ruled out of order, sir, a motion with respect to a referendum in Saskatchewan before any arrangement is accepted.

I say to the members opposite — I guess it's about the only thing I can say because my remarks would be out of order as a consequence — I would say that that is premature to say the least. But I do want to say this about the principle of referenda — and this was raised by members in the course of the main debate — right now the federal government has introduced and the House of Commons is debating a proposed . . . I'm not sure whether it's a plebiscite Bill or a referendum Bill.

I want the members of this House to consider these four or five key dangers pertaining to what this federal government has done at this time. First of all, who sets the question? I was astounded to hear the members of the Conservative Party talk that the questions should be determined by parliament. That belies an absence of any understanding of the concept of federalism. Yes, the member from Moosomin did, and so did the member from Morse. The record will prove that you did.

There are two aspects of the Canadian system which are important. One is parliamentary form of democracy, but the other system which the members opposite — and I'm going to say a word about this — obviously don't understand or don't accept is the concept of federalism.

Federalism, Mr. Speaker, is a joint sharing of power between two orders of government and the people. The federal parliament can speak for federal responsibilities, but it does not necessarily mean that it speaks for national interests or responsibilities. What the federal parliament does, does in the interests of its constitutional authority, but it does not mean that what it does is in the interests of the national interest.

The Fathers of Confederation had the balance between provincial and federal governments precisely for that reason. And this legislation which is before the House of Commons — which our standing committee should be debating and looking at — proposes that the question should be set by whom? The government of the day in Ottawa alone. They won't even, so far as I know, agree to amendment to allow the opposition parties in on the debate, let alone the provincial governments. Is that your notion of federalism?

Here's a second issue, the rules for a referendum fight.

There's no ceiling on expenditure. Does this mean that those with the money, those who can hire the ad agencies, those who can hire the polling firms, are going to be able to be in an advantageous position against the unemployed, those on welfare, those on social assistance, the aboriginal people, the very people that those members opposite profess so much concern about?

How are they going . . . how are the working men and women going to raise the funds to be able to mount a contrary, if that should be their point of view, argument on the referendum with no ceilings? Even in the Quebec referendum of 1980, by law they structured a yes committee and a no committee. And they set ceilings for it, and they tried to make the rules for the referendum fair, make that referendum fight fair. This legislation doesn't do that.

Is that your view, members of the opposition, Liberals and Conservatives, of how this nation building should be decided? To the richest go the spoils. To those who can contribute to the funds, they'll decide what kind of nature Canada should look like in the future, in the 1990s and the year 2000 and beyond. It may be the Liberals' and the Conservatives', it is not mine.

(1615)

Mr. Speaker, let me ask you another question. Why the referendum legislation now in the middle of the delicate negotiations? Why? If we are negotiating in good faith, somebody should be asking the Prime Minister and the federal government why it is that this referendum Bill or plebiscite Bill has to be moved at this time.

The Leader of the Liberal Party was talking about my timeliness. Well where has the Prime Minister been for the last two years? He could have introduced the referendum Bill two years ago, a year ago. What about his timeliness? Why is it in the last ten days or two weeks of these negotiations ministerially, there is all of a sudden now a motion and a Bill for plebiscite and referendum?

I think, Mr. Speaker, that this doesn't help the negotiations. I think this puts a threat on the negotiations. Is that their way of how we should be building a Canada and reconfederating and building national unity? It may be theirs; it isn't mine.

I want to speak to the question of where this referendum will be conducted, as a fourth point, Mr. Speaker. The legislation permits the referendum to be conducted in some provinces and not others. It may be a national referendum; it may not be a national referendum.

And by the way, the members opposite in speaking about a solely Saskatchewan plebiscite, are also in this same trap. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, the prospect of 11 questions — 10 provincial government questions, one supposed national question, or some combination thereof — 10 different questions with 10 different answers. What do we do as Canadians? Pick your answer that you like and continue to fight on it? Is that the way you build unity in this country? Maybe their idea; it's not mine.

Mr. Speaker, how about this point, the fifth point: does a referendum in this nation divide or does it unite? Just consider the contentious, complex issues which may be on a referendum plate. Now I'm not going to comment about the substance of the question of distinct society or the question of self-government, inherent self-government, or the question of Senate reform, or any of the other issues which are there, but these are complex, highly emotional issues. Does a referendum in this nature going to be a unifier or a divider?

Let me ask you another question, Mr. Speaker. If a national referendum was to be conducted, how do you decide whether it passes or not? Would the members of the Conservatives and the Liberals opposite say, well a majority vote across Canada decides that it's passed, thereby putting it in the hands of Ontario and Quebec only and excluding the regions again? Or must it pass 50 per cent plus one in every province? Or must it pass 50 per cent plus one on some regional basis? If on some regional basis, what regional basis? Why doesn't the Bill speak to this?

And finally, Mr. Speaker, a referendum at the end of the day becomes a referendum on the government of the day. At the end of the day, a government that proposes a referendum inevitably will have the referendum question mixed up with the issues of how people feel toward that government. Is that really what the Prime Minister wants to have? Does he want that kind of a debate conducted in this kind of an atmosphere?

Mr. Speaker, these are issues which are not only applicable nationally, but they're also applicable to those who advocate that there should be a plebiscite or a referendum provincially as well. Not all of them, but many of them do.

And so I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the establishment of a standing committee fits in logically and perfectly. When we establish a standing committee we have an ongoing vehicle for ongoing consultations of the public and this Assembly in public about the nation's business and about the constitution.

We have the chance to — if we have to have a plebiscite in this province — work out the wording in a bi-partisan way if we have to do it. We have the chance of having ongoing reports on an educative value, not only to the Chamber but to the public at large.

We will have an ongoing body which will receive reports from the minister responsible for the constitutional negotiations, the member from Fairview who's in Montreal and in Toronto next week to answer questions to defend the position of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Why would the members shy away from that? Why would the members opposite turn their back on a chance to explore in detail? They say, well give us access to the constitutional affairs people. There's no problem to doing that. But that's the very back-room kind of exchange of information of which they're so highly critical in previous constitutional negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a substitution. This is in aid of, in aid of the objective which I hope fervently, we all hope, will be achieved, and that is a resolution of this constitutional impasse and a more unified country.

This committee is a buttress to that. Not the most important development, but an important development — an important, ongoing way to dialogue and to use the members of this Legislative Assembly in a proper role as the representatives of the people of Saskatchewan in determining the right constitutional position.

I want to make two final points — three very quick final points before I sit down, Mr. Speaker. I said I would return to the question of vision of Canada. And I want to make this point one more time, Mr. Speaker, as firmly as I can.

The record will show that the Conservative opposition in this legislature believes that whatever the Parliament of Canada decides with respect to question or constitutional consultation is good enough for it. The argument was, by the members opposite, that they've had Dobbie, they've had Spicer, they've had Edwards, they've had the constitutional committee meetings, they've had all the federal government consultations required, and what more do we as Canadians need?

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is a position which says that the national interest is decided by the federal parliament. I am frankly astounded at that proposition by any Saskatchewan political party. Provincial governments have been established to speak for regional interests. Ontario and Quebec have enough power in parliament, thank you very much, to look after their own interests.

Provincial governments through their powers as assigned under section 92 and through co-operative federalism can speak about their interests, and in the debate evolves the national interest. To take the position — as the Conservatives provincially apparently have done so in this debate today — that they're simply going to withdraw from a Saskatchewan point of view, that they're going to withdraw from a western Canadian point of view, is putting the interests of this region and this province to the tender mercies of Ontario and the larger provinces of this country. And I say no matter how well intentioned they are, that is not federalism and that's not what any responsible political party in Saskatchewan or the West should be doing. Not whatsoever.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And that's why I was surprised about this debate. I was surprised how they come out so vigorously again even in opposition — although in some ways it isn't surprising — to defend the Prime Minister, as they have in government and now in opposition.

In this regard, however, the defence is not a matter of the Prime Minister. I leave him out of it as an individual who's doing the very best that he can. But this is a skewed vision of federalism, and I really urge the Leader of the Opposition and all the would-be leaders over there to carefully think out their points of view before they next step out on this particular issue.

Now two more points. The Leader of the Liberal Party talked about timeliness. I would say to her, as I said in my remarks a few moments ago, that it was not timely to bring in the motion earlier. Dobbie had not reported, the constitutional ministers have not been set up, the nature of the direction of the negotiations had not even been unveiled. It is timely on day — whatever it is — 15 or 16 of the House . . .

An Hon. Member: — Seventeen.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — . . . seventeen of the House, timely right after the debate in the budget speech to introduce this motion and to debate it. The member also, from Greystone, says that what does this mean in the context of the western premiers who apparently have set out a bottom line. There again she is completely and totally wrong.

The western premiers have not set out a bottom line. I forwarded to the Leader of the Liberal Party, as I did to the Leader of the Opposition, the communique — communique 9 from the western premiers which all of the premiers and the two territorial premiers agreed to, six of us. And there's no bottom line here.

What this communique says is this: that the premiers received a disturbing report and they expressed alarm at the federal government dismissing western concerns, and that little progress had been made on western concerns. And they identified the western concerns — fundamental Senate reform such as Triple E. Such as.

They identified the provincial ratification role on treaties which affect provincial jurisdiction — international treaties of trade. They identified the transfer payments — off-loading, a part of fiscal federalism. It's a part of federalism.

They identified regional development opportunities, whether it's telecommunications. And I'm surprised about this because the members opposite were defending SaskTel when they were in government. They tried to be as vigorous about it as any government could be, and I give them credit for this.

This is what the premiers were concerned about — why aren't we talking about communications as a matter of a regional development tool, or resources. They wanted clarification on duplication and services. I've spoken to that issue. And they want the issue of the establishment of new provinces on the same basis that existing provinces were established.

There's no bottom line there. What there is is a plea for the western current concerns, those concerns and perhaps others to be heard and to be debated and not to be summarily shoved off the table by the federal government in its negotiation approaches.

We've got to remember, Mr. Speaker — and this is as important a point as I have to make in this debate this afternoon — this is not Meech Lake round two. This is the Canada round of negotiations. And if it's the Canada round, it means everybody's concerns have got to be a part of this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — It means that the aboriginal concerns have got to be a part of this. It means that the concerns of the West have got to be a part of this. It means that the concerns of the Maritimes and the Atlantic provinces have got to be a part of this. And it means the concerns of Quebec have got to be a part of this as well.

I mean, I am absolutely astounded that the Conservatives and the Liberal leader there by implication would say that it's okay for the Premier of Ontario to fight for one of his main issues, which is an entrenched social covenant, or social charter which is enforceable. Whatever we say is good or bad about that, let's leave the merits aside from that. It's okay for him to stand up on that, but the western premiers shouldn't get up to stand up about resources and telecommunications. I say shame on both the Liberals and the Conservatives for abandoning the West on that issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — I say shame on you that you criticize us for me standing up and taking the issues which you fought for when you were in government at the time — many of them, or pretended to — and saying that they've got to be dealt with. It's not that all of them should be dealt with or can be dealt with or that we aren't flexible in the negotiations. There is no bottom line. The bottom line is that this is the Canada round.

And I say to the members opposite, if they think that this is something other than the Canada round, they've got to get their heads out of the sand and get into the reality of the constitutional negotiations. And I say that specifically to the members opposite. This is what we're trying to do and that's what the communiques did. There is no bottom line, and herein lies another good reason why the standing committee can be a forum for the exchange of views in the directions that we're taking, and the ideas and the criticisms from everybody, private members included.

Nobody has the absolute wisdom on nation building. There is no monolithic party whip approach to this. This is building Canada. We come from different perspectives. And the members opposite should come on side and help us build rather than stand on the sidelines and be critical about this duty which any premier, regardless of ideology, has to fulfil.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, although it's not particularly relevant to this motion but I simply have to say this because it is used I would say insidiously from time to time, but thankfully not very effectively, the issue of 1982 by the Conservative caucus and by other people, but particularly the Conservative caucus opposite — they argue that in 1982 what happened was wrong. And the member from Thunder Creek says it was.

And that means that the member from Thunder Creek takes the position that what the nine provincial governments and the prime minister of the day should have done is walked away from the table, had no

constitutional agreement, and left the tender mercies of Canada to the hands of René Lévesque, the separatist deluxe of this country. That's what the would-be leader of the Conservative caucus in Saskatchewan says, because that was the option.

(1630)

Is 1982 a perfect deal? Of course it isn't. I said that in 1982; I've written about it; I repeat it again. Was it the deal that was necessary at the time? The answer is yes. Because no deal would have left those who say they defend Canada . . . would have left those who say they support Canada, having turned the issues over to a situation where there had been no compromise and no arrangement or agreement at all, and the separatist government of the day would have been there. And what do you think they would have made of that situation?

Now we've got a federalist government in Quebec that wants to come to the table. We've got to seize this opportunity to make a deal with him — a reasonable and a fair deal for them and for the rest of Canada. That we have to do. But to argue that we should not have made a deal is an argument that plays in the hands of the Quebec separatists. Make no mistake about that. And I'm surprised by the Conservatives opposite advocating that position.

Of course it's not perfect. Of course it's not perfect. But what of the 1982 deal would you do away with, Mr. Member from Morse? Would you eliminate the Charter of Rights? Tell us about that. Well tell me, would you eliminate the Charter of Rights? Well I'll ask the member from Thunder Creek whether he would eliminate the Charter of Rights. You see what they do. They don't answer, Mr. Speaker.

Would they eliminate section 92A which gives the control of resources to a high extent to the provinces? Would you eliminate that from the 1982 deal? Would you do that? No, you see. He doesn't tell us on that either.

Tell me, would you eliminate section 35, which for the first time recognized constitutionally the existing treaty and aboriginal rights of Indian, Metis, and Inuit people, an historic first? Would you eliminate that from 1982? Tell me about that. Would you eliminate the amending formula which for the first time put the provinces on a footing of equality? Would you do that in 1982? Would you do that?

An Hon. Member: — What about property rights?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — The member says property rights. I tell you who eliminated property rights. Every premier of every political stripe and every prime minister eliminated property rights right from day one — every one of them did. Every one of them did. Every one of them. And you know that to be the case. Everybody knows that to be the case.

These, Mr. Speaker, are people who do not understand the concepts of federalism. They do not . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, I don't understand them perfectly, but I'll tell you one thing — I understand a little bit about

history and I understand a little bit about federalism, and they simply do not want to learn; they simply say, this shibboleth that they mouth, that this thing that's brought about by 1982. Look, 1986-87 when they opened up Meech Lake — when they opened up Meech Lake, I think questions had to be asked at that point as to why it was done and in the way it was done.

The reality is the members are right — we have deficiencies. The members are right — we have to make sure that Quebec has an honourable entry back into Canada. The members are wrong if they think that it means that western Canada has nothing to gain from this either, because we do. We have issues which we want to advocate as well.

I say to the members opposite, in this business of nation building, nothing can be done with perfection. It is a question of give and take; it's a question of compromise; it's a question of speaking up for regional interests and keeping your mind on the national interests, getting a balance, striking a balance, and working and working and working to keep this great country together of ours.

It's a miracle, Canada is, as Arthur Lower once wrote. And its existence has to be reworked. That miracle has to be reworked every generation. That's why we need the standing committee. That's why we need to talk about these issues and these differences to understand and to better accept the foundations upon which this great country is built and upon which this great province succeeds and has been in some ways the leader, like in medicare and other issues, of what it means to be Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, we can do it. We can do it in a . . . with our differences, political and otherwise, we can still do it. And this standing committee is the right forum in which to do it. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm therefore very pleased to move this motion. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 4:36 p.m. until 4:41 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 46

Romanow	Johnson
Van Mulligen	Trew
Thompson	Sonntag
Wiens	Flavel
Simard	Roy
Tchorzewski	Cline
Lingenfelter	Scott
Shillington	McPherson
Koskie	Wormsbecker
Anguish	Crofford
Goulet	Stanger
Atkinson	Knezacek
Kowalsky	Keeping
MacKinnon	Renaud
Penner	Langford
Upshall	Jess
Hagel	Neudorf
Koenker	Swenson

Lorje	Martens
Lyons	Britton
Lautermilch	Toth
Calvert	Goohsen
Hamilton	D'Autremont

Nays — Nil

(1645)

Authorization of the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move the second government motion:

That the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs be authorized: to review and make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on proposed constitutional amendments brought forward by the Saskatchewan legislature, the Parliament of Canada, or any other legislatures in Canada, and to invite presentations and the expression of views from individuals and groups; that the committee report from time to time to meet the constitutional time lines arising out of nation-wide negotiations and amendment processes, and in this regard the committee is authorized to release its report when the House is not sitting by filing with the Clerk for distribution; and further, that the committee shall have the authority to meet during the session when the Assembly is not meeting, or between sessions, to meet outside the seat of government to hear testimony and to acquire research assistance as deemed advisable by the committee.

And before I take my place, Mr. Speaker, there is a small technical amendment which has to be introduced by my colleague, the member from Cumberland, which is straight technical, but I'll move this now for the moment. Thank you.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again it's my pleasure to rise in the Assembly and speak on this matter, the matter of our constitution and how Saskatchewan is going to deal with it. During my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I'll be moving an amendment to the motion as presented by the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, it was very interesting in hearing the Premier close debate on the past motion, and as a sort of an aside toward the end of the debate say that I know it doesn't have much relevance on this particular debate today, but I want to make a few comments about 1982. Those few comments, Mr. Speaker, obviously went on at some length. And it reminded me of the poem of the ancient mariner, the way the Premier sort of justified his part in that process some 10 years ago; tried to sort of set the record straight, if you will, Mr. Speaker, with the people of Saskatchewan particularly who took a great deal of issue with some of the things that happened during that debate some 10 years ago.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that this

opposition has brought forward amendments to the motions brought forward by government today is that people in Saskatchewan are telling us that they don't want that same process to happen again. Now the Premier would like to stand in this Assembly and tell us that somehow he has changed his suit of clothes, that he would not embark on a process that was similar to that one.

And we heard him just a few moments ago stand in this Assembly and give all sorts of justifications in his mind as to why it was right and proper. He says that Canada would have been thrown to the separatist wolves if they hadn't struck that deal; if McMurtry and Chrétien and the hon. member from Riversdale had not sat up in that kitchen all night and designed a deal, then the separatists would have had their way with Canadians.

Well quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, by leaving the province of Quebec out of that process, I'm not sure that we haven't given separatism that extra life, that extra bit of something to hang their hat on with Quebecers that we might not have had, had we either worked a little harder, taken the process down the road a little further and not excluded one-third of Canadians from that 1982 deal.

But I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker, there were certain things on the agenda of people back in 1982 that necessitated that process going forward. We had a government in this province that said, we are going to control our resources through the use of Crown corporations, through the use of nationalization. We are going to create a whole different system in western Canada, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure that preyed on the minds of people like Allan Blakeney and the member from Riversdale.

I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that when the trade-offs were being made at that time those things such as the entrenchment of property rights by individual Canadians . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. I have listened very carefully. The member must realize we have just voted on the last resolution or the last motion. He is now on a new motion and his comments must relate to the establishment of the committee on Constitutional Affairs and not dwell on what was discussed and debated in the last motion.

Mr. Swenson: — I appreciate your ruling, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly will attempt to keep my remarks germane to the motion as moved by the Premier. But I must say that, Mr. Speaker, I believe this motion is as wide-ranging as the previous one was, that the issues that are before us in designing a committee and a mandate that will truly try and grasp the feeling of Saskatchewan citizens vis-a-vis the constitutional debate, necessitates, Mr. Speaker, as we go through that process, that we are absolutely sure in our minds in this legislature about how that process will affect the people of this province.

And if we don't learn from the mistakes of the past, that if we don't look at the future, then, Mr. Speaker, this standing committee as proposed by the government will not do the job that it's purported to do. Mr. Speaker, I can think of nothing, nothing more special for this Assembly

to come to than some kind of reasonable conclusion. It means that as this committee is struck, that the parameters under which it works are going to have to be something that people at the end of the day, in this province at least, can stand up with pride and say that we did our best as far as keeping Canada whole.

And that means, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day . . . And the Premier in his previous comments said, I don't rule out referendum or plebiscite as an end result of this committee's work, but he took an inordinate amount of time saying I don't believe that that process is the right one. And, Mr. Speaker, if we have some preconceived notions about whether it will or will not work, preconceived notions that this committee of this legislature is going to take out to the people, then I say they will not work.

If we have a committee, Mr. Speaker, that as part of its mandate is to not only talk about the four or five issues that the Premier said may ultimately decide whether we have a constitutional deal or not, but as part of its mandate is to study the very broad spectrum of things as he said, such as federal off-loading in various areas of our society, then I think, Mr. Speaker, we are going to have to have an awful lot of standing committees of this legislature if we're going to discuss each and every one of those issues in the context of our constitutional matrix.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that that's what Saskatchewan people are expecting out of this process. I don't think they are expecting members of the New Democratic government going around this province with this very broad range of economic topics on their agenda.

I think those are rightly issues that are debated in this legislature. If the question is off-loading in health care, then we have a forum in this province, in this Legislative Building, to discuss that and debate it, pass legislation, take on the federal government as the Premier said in the area of telecommunications. The electors of Saskatchewan have elected you and I and all the other members gathered here to do that.

But yes there are some issues that are absolutely crucial. I agree with the Premier. The question of aboriginal rights, aboriginal self-government is one that is fundamental to us coming to some type of agreement in this country. We cannot have a situation occur again in this country like we saw in Quebec a year ago. It simply is unacceptable to expect that that portion of our citizenry would feel that alienated from the process.

And that's why I think the earlier arguments on a special committee were valid. I know that the legislature has decided that we will have a standing committee, but I think I want Saskatchewan people at the end of the day to feel that this was a special effort, that the mandate of this committee is special compared to some of the other standing committees, and that its make-up, its mandate, and how the members on that committee conduct themselves, will indeed be special and that the urges to delve into every sort of partisan rhetoric indeed that are often not far below the surface in this very political environment in Saskatchewan . . . It means that indeed this committee will have to have a very special thought

and word and deed attached to it.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that in listening to the Premier's earlier comments, that if he truly believed some of the things that he said, that he wouldn't have this automatic defensive attitude toward the mistakes of 1982. That he wouldn't take such a defensive attitude with other members of this legislature, Mr. Speaker, who feel as deeply, who feel as deeply about their country, as what the member from Riversdale does; who feel just as deeply when they propose amendments to the government's motions as the member from Riversdale does about his country.

And yet he tried to assign motives to members of the opposition in their opposition to that motion. And I think if the Premier truly believed the things that he said in this legislature, that maybe he would take that to a little higher plane and realize that that motion was brought forward, that amendment was brought forward, and has exactly the same amount of feeling for Canada as the member purports to have.

Mr. Speaker, this debate is going to go on, I'm sure, at some length as we design the committee that will deal with Saskatchewan people.

And today I would like to move an amendment to the motion, seconded by the member from Souris-Cannington, that reads as follows:

That the following be inserted after the words "amendment processes":

and further, that the committee will not make a final report until such time as the people have been able to express their opinion on any proposed constitutional resolution in a general referendum;

I so move.

The Speaker: — I find the amendment in order . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . What's your point of order?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, my point of order is very simple and to the point. The first motion set up a committee. The second motion sets up the terms of reference of the committee. When under the first motion the referendum amendment was proposed and ruled unlawful, out of order, with the greatest of respect, sir, how can a subsidiary motion permit the amendment?

The Speaker: — It's simply that the Premier says the second one is a subsidiary motion. The two motions stand by themselves. The one simply sets up the committee; the second one sets up the process of how the committee is to go about doing its consultation with the people and reporting back to the Legislative Assembly. Therefore I find the amendment in order.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a fair amount I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, but at this time I would like to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:01 p.m.