

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I shall give notice on Friday next and ask the government the following question:

Regarding polling surveys used in preparing the budget: (1) What were the purposes of these polls? (2) Who was hired to conduct these polls? (3) When were these polls conducted? (4) What questions were asked? (5) What were the results? (6) At what cost were these polls conducted?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly two groups of students from W.F. Ready School. The first group are a group of grade 4 students, 23 in number, who are with their teacher Cheryl Ganong and chaperon Leslie Baldwin.

The second group are a group of 23 as well and they're also grade 4 students. And they're all in your Speaker's gallery, Mr. Speaker, with their teacher Miss M. Ready and chaperons Ms. Helgason who is the assistant for the hearing impaired and Ms. Baldwin the teacher for the hearing impaired.

I would ask members of the Assembly to join with me in greeting these guests. I'll be meeting with them after a tour in room 235 for refreshments and a number of questions I hope they'll have from the observation in the gallery today and their tour.

I ask members to join with me in greeting them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly 50 students from the Hudson Bay School which, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you're familiar with. They're a grade 7 class. They're seated in the west gallery. Their teachers are Garry Hein, Blain Emerson, and Phyllis Low. Chaperons are Elvina Rumak and Laurie Wolowski, and the bus driver is Al McDougal.

The Hudson Bay School has a tradition of an excellent education system, Mr. Speaker, as well as an excellent sports education system. And some of the graduates from the Hudson Bay area are people like Trent Yawney from the Chicago Blackhawks — or now from the Calgary Flames — and Bob Poley from the Saskatchewan Roughriders.

I'd like the House to welcome these people, these guests of ours.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wormsbecker: — I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the members of the Assembly a group of 54 students seated in the east gallery — grade 8 students from the Weyburn Junior High School. And accompanying the students are their teachers, Murray Sproule and Tracy Johnston, and also bus drivers Gary McKenzie and Roger Bellavance.

I welcome the students to the Assembly and I look forward to meeting with them after they've had an opportunity of taking in question period. I'll give them a few refreshments and answer any questions they have, Mr. Speaker. I'd like everybody to join with me in welcoming the students.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly the 41 grade 8 students from Brownell School in Saskatoon. I had the pleasure of meeting with this group before question period and I trust that they will find the proceedings very interesting and informative.

They're accompanied by their teachers Catherine McCormick and Larry Klopoushak. They're seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask the members to join me in welcoming the students from Brownell School to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a pleasure and a privilege for me last Saturday night to participate in the opening ceremonies of the provincial court judges' conference now going on at the University of Saskatchewan.

This is a conference being held by the judges on the issue of racial, ethnic, and cultural equity. It was organized by the Western Judicial Education Centre, the College of Law, and the provincial court judges of Saskatchewan. As well, Indian and Metis organizations and the multicultural community were involved quite heavily in both the planning and in participation at the conference itself.

And, Mr. Speaker, the judges are seeking to better understand the social context of decision making, including important issues of race, and they're listening to people from the community.

Our country is comprised of aboriginal people and immigrants and their descendants, and we really are a mosaic of peoples, Mr. Speaker. We should rejoice in that and at the same time remember that Canada, of all countries, should be a place where tolerance and mutual respect are demanded.

Racism is certainly a troubling concern in our country and we should commend the judges, Mr. Speaker, for the measures that they're taking to better understand its

dynamics and consequences.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a part of the . . . or a past member of the vice-chair of the emergency measures committee for Regina, I rise today to offer congratulations to the organizations and people involved in handling the rupture of Saskatchewan Power transformer in downtown Regina yesterday. Our member from Lake Centre also told me that as a representative of the area she felt this was handled so well she didn't receive a single call of concern.

The incident involved a spill of about 400 litres of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) contaminated mineral oil. Just minutes after the rupture occurred, the Regina fire department, city of Regina environment department and the SaskPower department arrived on the scene to handle the emergency. Thanks to the quick action of these dedicated people the area was sealed off and the spill was completely contained. Their actions prevented any damage to the environment or danger to the public.

The oil that leaked was later determined to contain three parts per billion of PCBs, below the level considered to be safe of five parts per billion. However it should be noted that the workers involved in the containment and clean-up had no way of knowing this before, when they were dealing with the spill.

Dedicated workers like these across our province risk their own safety on a daily basis so that the rest of us can feel safe and secure. I invite all members of the Assembly to join with me in offering congratulations and thanks to those who responded to yesterday's emergency for a job well done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It was my privilege last Saturday to speak at the Saskatoon Social Planning Council's founding annual meeting. This is a new umbrella organization of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and community individuals committed to improving the quality of life and to enhancing the well-being of all residents in Saskatoon. Their specific objectives include social research, policy analysis, program development, co-ordination and integration of services at the community level.

Mr. Speaker, these are dedicated people, a broad-based, grass roots organization who are very much a part of their community. The council wants to work with each level of government, and I invite all members to join in wishing them well and pledging our support to them. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a new regional economic development council that's just been organized in the east-central part of Saskatchewan. The name of the organization is the Woodlands Regional Economic Council. It has just recently been incorporated and registered under The Non-Profit Corporations Act.

Mr. Speaker, the boundaries of the region shall include from Kelvington to the north, east to the Hudson Bay, east to the Manitoba border, south along the Manitoba border to the Qu'Appelle Valley, and west to Highway No. 47, north to Melville, and west along Highway No. 15.

This district, Mr. Speaker, includes some 23 communities that have been involved in the development of this particular council. The objectives, Mr. Speaker, are to promote the quality of life in east-central Saskatchewan, to co-ordinate communication and activities amongst the members in that area, and to establish a community futures corporation within the next couple of months.

The interim executive, Mr. Speaker, is Mr. Roger Pitstick of Wadena, Alfred Moore of Ituna, Lynn Krotenko of Canora, and Terry Ortynsky of Yorkton, Don Olson of Sturgis.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the members of the Parkland region, I wish to commend the work of the regional delegates and extend our support and co-operation in assisting in the efforts of enhancing and promoting the economic development and growth of our Parkland region.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, I want to report to the Assembly on events this morning before the Court of Appeal. I went to the court to personally observe the NDP (New Democratic Party) lawyers presenting their GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) case against Saskatchewan farmers.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the government was thrown out of court and told that they had nothing to appeal. Mr. Speaker, it is very important to note that the Minister of Agriculture failed to present a defence to the courts, so that everyone understands when the farmers made their case against the government the law required the government to make a defence. The Minister of Agriculture failed to make that defence, and the Court of Appeal said since the minister did not follow the law, he had nothing to appeal. The minister is now in the position of going back to the court to ask for some other way to get at Saskatchewan farmers.

Mr. Speaker, this is as important for this Assembly since the NDP have announced they will be bringing a new law tomorrow to rewrite history. In effect this government is going to tell the Court of Appeal to take a hike, that this Premier and this Minister of Agriculture are above the law. Mr. Speaker, it is strange indeed that the government will spend thousands of dollars trying to destroy farm families at the Court of Appeal while it prepares to force through this legislature, a law that says a contract will be deemed to have been followed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to announce that the residents of Redberry and particularly the home care board members and staff are pleased with the 20 per cent increase in their funding.

This 20 per cent will go a long way to help them fill their mandate to provide additional services for our seniors.

It is with great satisfaction that I as MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) for Redberry have the opportunity to be part of this very progressive step. The seniors and handicapped in my constituency now have the privilege to remain in their own homes with dignity. To remain in their own homes is a top priority for these special people.

It is with great pride that my government accepts responsibility for these very worthy residents of Saskatchewan. This is as well a positive move for rural Saskatchewan as it allows people to remain in their farm homes and small communities. This action creates business and employment in these rural communities.

Such action, along with many senior citizen centres established in the 1970s, do in fact enhance the quality of life for rural seniors. The people of Redberry represent a large number of ethnic groups, and to be cared for in their own homes and communities — often in their mother tongue — is a tremendous public service to a very deserving segment of our society. I am pleased to be part of a government, a government that believes in humanity first.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1345)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Changes to GRIP

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture. Today this government in all its mad rush to destroy everything ever done by the previous government has totally handled the changes they are going to force on farmers in the GRIP program. First there was virtually no consultation, then they tried to scare farmers off by imposing a \$750,000 bond, and then they said they would force the changes through by passing yet another piece of retroactive legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the question is this: if the government is so sure of itself, so sure that it is legally and morally correct, why has it delayed in filing its defence in the courts? And why don't you give the farmers a chance to go with '91 GRIP? And why are you delaying in filing your defence in the court?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I believe the matters of the court are in the hands of the lawyers representing the Crop Insurance Corporation and the Government of Saskatchewan and will be dealt with in the manner than court matters are dealt with. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, the matter is not before the court, and the minister, if he would have been there, would have understood that the matter was thrown out because he didn't file his defence. I'm asking the minister

when are you planning to file that defence?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, my understanding from the Department of Justice lawyers is that the matter of application relative to the appeal are still being considered and will be considered and these matters will be dealt with.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker and Mr. Minister, are you delaying the defence simply to have your legislation brought in to provide the information then, that that will be the defence that you're going to provide for the lawyers to take back to the Queen's Bench court? Is that the reason why you're delaying the action in the court is so that you can provide that as evidence against the farmers of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I believe the member opposite is aware that some other legal technicalities which were not of our doing have been introduced into this appeal process and the matters will be dealt with in due time.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture has taken upon himself to move from the Department of Justice to hire lawyers now who are NDP lawyers, the same lawyers who were asked by the government to kick out the secretaries and chief executive officers of the . . . the employees of the province.

Will you now tell this Assembly that the only reason that you are delaying the court action and filing your defence is that your only defence is placing before this Assembly the legislation that you're proposing to present?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, just for the record, I believe the lawyers of whom the member opposite speaks are working for the Crop Insurance Corporation and they will be dealt with in due time.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, will you tell . . . Mr. Minister, will you tell this legislature when you plan to introduce this legislation to this Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, soon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, I assume that you should . . . or I am going to make the assumption that you won't be as flippant with the farmers about letting them choose between '91 and '92 GRIP as you are with the answers you're providing to this Assembly. Will you tell me: is it going to be tomorrow or the next day or the day after that you're going to file this? Because you're coming to a conclusion on June 23 that you're going to have to file this or you're going to be done — is that going to happen before June 24?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the matters of the courts will be dealt with by those who are best able to deal with those matters. I have had better things to do than sit before

the courts because there are people there with the opportunity to carry those matters forward.

We've been out talking to the farmers and hearing their concerns about their situation in farming. Maybe the member opposite would be well advised to go out and talk to a few farmers so he can — instead of pretending to be interested — show that there is a real interest in providing some assistance to farmers in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, will you provide to this Assembly what contingency plans you have in place that in the event the court rules that the government does not have the right to retroactively change the GRIP program by making changes to the contract after the deadline.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the detail to which the member opposite refers will be addressed through the appropriate processes, and I continue to invite the member opposite to work with Saskatchewan farmers to take the message to Ottawa that it's time the federal government took its responsibility, its appropriate responsibility, for agriculture in Saskatchewan and recognize that we do not have the capacity as a result of the actions of the members opposite to fund these kinds of programs that would be of help to farmers under these circumstances.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, will you give the farmers the choice between '91 GRIP and '92 GRIP? Why don't you do that and save the whole province some money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the choices the farmers now have are choices about how they survive on their farms. What we intend to do is deal with the issues of income and debt and we invite you to work with us in getting the federal government — your colleagues in Ottawa — to work with us in assuring farm incomes are at a decent level in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about giving the farmers some breathing room on income and debt. You're just taking income away from them by disqualifying them from '91 GRIP. You're taking on an average of \$30 a cultivated acre in this province, and you know that because the court heard evidence of that fact. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a fact.

Will you or will you not give the farmers the choice with the '91 GRIP and '92 GRIP? Let the farmers choose and let them tell you what they choose rather than you telling them what to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is

aware of the program that's in place in Saskatchewan. He's aware of the reasons why it had to be implemented as a result of the absolute incompetence with which the Leader of the Opposition and the members behind him introduced the program; the incompetence with which they negotiated federal funding for Saskatchewan farm assistance; the incompetence demonstrated by the taking on of in excess of \$200 million of federal funding onto the Saskatchewan taxpayers' shoulders while you proceeded to decimate the economy in other areas.

I think the members opposite ought to be ashamed of the record they've had and they better join with us in trying to provide some improvements to Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, it isn't a reflection on this side of the House — the incompetence. The 50,000 people who have a contract with '91 GRIP think you are incompetent and that's the point.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, what happens, Mr. Speaker . . . And I'm going to ask the minister this question: if you are told by the courts that you are wrong, what will you do? Why don't you do as Gloria Baer wrote in the *Leader-Post* just the other day, and I quote:

If Wiens thinks the program is exactly what (the) farmers want, why not give the farmers the option of choosing (between) . . . '91 or . . . '92?

And, Mr. Speaker and Mr. Minister, that's a question I'm asking you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is aware, as I said earlier, of the program that's in place, aware of the added efficiency with which it delivered, aware of the wrong signals that the program corrects. And as the members opposite ought to continue to be shamed for the actions they've taken in bankrupting this province and allowing off-loading . . . in fact, leading the federal government exercise to off-load, putting other provinces in Canada at risk to allow the federal government to put loads onto the provinces that otherwise were borne by the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker and Mr. Minister, last week the federal Department of Agriculture release, Statistics Canada, showed that you're absolutely wrong. There's 80 per cent funding from the federal government compared to your 20. And the highest it ever was, was 82 per cent.

The question that you have to answer to the public of Saskatchewan and the farmers of Saskatchewan: are you prepared to provide '91 GRIP or '92, and let the farmers choose? That's the question you have to answer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite ought to review a few facts. The farmers in the south-west that we visited with yesterday, when we talked about drought in Saskatchewan, were appalled at the fact that the government represented by you in 1988 took on \$100 million debt load which we are now repaying in our very rough financial circumstance at the rate of \$15 million per year now, as a result of an agreement with the federal government, at a time when the province did not contribute money towards those programs.

And the year following you took on half of the federal government's contribution to crop insurance, a cost to the province of 40 to \$60 million annually. And a few years later when the western grain stabilization program was discontinued, which was funded by the federal government without provincial support, you took on the GRIP program and the NISA (net income stabilization account) program, costing between 150 and \$200 million a year, the net result being the cost to Saskatchewan taxpayers for farm income support now in excess of \$200 million for which we only borrowed the cost of crop insurance administration before 1989.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Has the minister provided to the Minister of Finance an observation about what the cost will be if the court rules that you have to pay the farmers of Saskatchewan their losses between the '91 GRIP and '92? Have you asked the Minister of Finance how much money that really is?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite should have thought about the costs to the province when they designed some of the farm support programs that were here before.

First of all, up front costs of \$200 million. Secondly, 35 per cent of the cost of program deficits. Thirdly, cuddling the federal government as it refuses to meet its commitment to Saskatchewan farmers in the face of an international price war. That kind of action is unforgivable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, the courts have said and they have said it very firmly that your actions . . . and in fact, Mr. Minister, your deputy minister told the court that you are incompetent. You haven't provided the information before the March 15 deadline on the contract, and you haven't provided the defence, and you've lost the case.

Mr. Minister, my question is back to you again on this matter: how much is it going to cost you to deliver '92 program when the court tells you that you have to pay for the losses to the farmers of '91? How much money is that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I would invite the members opposite to recognize that there are matters

before the court, and the speculation in which they engage is of no value to anyone. But I do invite them when it comes to the matter of accurate information to examine for themselves the record of Saskatchewan's contribution to farm support when everyone knows that the federal government is responsible for international trade and that it is international trade that has decimated the incomes of farmers in Saskatchewan, that it is international trade that puts at risk our supply and management industry, that it is a national responsibility that we keep our agricultural sector healthy in order to keep a strong economy in Canada.

Let you examine what you have done to that industry in allowing the federal government to off-load its responsibility as you continue to coddle a government less popular than the numbers of people that believe a certain once-upon-a-time popular singer was alive.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, I'd like to ask the question. You were down at Orkney yesterday. Did you tell the farmers down there how much they were going to lose on a per-acre basis simply because you changed '91 and '92 GRIP? Will you tell the people here how much they told you they were going to lose per acre choosing . . . making your choice between '91 and '92?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, let me inform the member about what we were told on our tour of Bengough and Orkney and Mankota and other areas in the south-west. The people with whom we met were infuriated by the actions of the federal government in not coming to grips with the crisis that's in Saskatchewan.

The people in that area are seriously concerned about their grasslands. They are seriously concerned about their water supplies. They are seriously concerned about the delay by the federal government in the shifting of the question about whether or not grasslands would be made available in the park there for the area that's burned out; a shifting of the responsibility from the Minister of Agriculture to the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Charest.

In the same way that when we talk about the responsibility for federal government cost sharing in Saskatchewan, they've shifted from the Agriculture minister who can't answer the questions, to the Finance minister. They recognize that there is a problem in the province of Saskatchewan. They recognize we have the inability to pay. The farmers in the South know . . .

The Speaker: — Next question.

Consultations with Livestock Industry

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions relate to the same minister. And he has just proven an article that I'd like to quote from, from *The Western Producer* that says, and I quote: One of the government's biggest problems is Berny Wien's ego. He can't say he made a mistake. If he can't answer he hollers

and yells and turns red. Mr. Minister, you have demonstrated that for the people of Saskatchewan this afternoon.

Now you, on the advice of your Premier and . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Let the member proceed.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that.

Mr. Minister, you, on the advice of the Premier and the Minister of Finance, have embarked upon destroying the grain sector of this province. But you are also systematically killing the livestock sector with the slashing of the FeedGAP (feed grain adjustment program) program and the livestock cash advance program. You were seeking, sir, revenge on the NDP defeat at the hands of the farmers in '82 and '86.

My question to you, Mr. Minister, is: whether or not you have met with the livestock sector, including the hog marketing board recently? And will you tell us whether or not you are listening to their legitimate concerns and whether or not you are contemplating scrapping your plan to kill the livestock sector by killing the FeedGAP program?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the member was present in the House when other members of the group opposite asked those same questions. I have answered them before; I will answer them again, for his benefit, if he wants to take the time.

The fact is I spoke to the stock growers' convention in Moose Jaw last week and the members of your caucus were there and they heard the response, and they recognized that the last statement that was made before I left after my speech was a commitment by one of the leaders of the stock growers that they would meet with us and examine the facts around this question and work with us in determining whether this was the best place to make investments in Saskatchewan.

As well, Mr. Speaker, several days later I met with the pork industry and we discussed the plans for expansion in Saskatchewan. They do not take the negative view that the members opposite take. This was a committee of the pork producers in Saskatchewan who met with us promoting the idea of expansion, recognizing that certainly it's nice to have some assistance, but recognizing that in this province farmers know the facts of business and they know they can compete because they do it better than anywhere else.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I commend the minister for cooling down and calming down a little bit so that we can have a rational discussion here.

You talk, Mr. Minister, about meeting with the pork board. Richard Wright who is the provincial chairman of Saskatchewan Pork International Marketing Board, has this to say about you and your plans, and I quote: The timing of these budget announcements has been a major psychological blow, and heaped further discouragement

on producers resolve to continue. End quote.

Does the minister know how many this will force out of business, and in fact, Mr. Minister, will actually cost the government and the taxpayers of this province millions of dollars because farmers will not be able to honour their commitments to Ag Credit? And can you, sir, tell me now what studies you have that show that what you are doing with the FeedGAP and livestock cash advance is actually going to be productive for the Saskatchewan taxpayer?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the biggest psychological blow to the province of Saskatchewan was the actions of the members opposite in bringing forward, in bringing upon Saskatchewan, a \$15 billion debt, a \$760 million annual interest cost which will continue to grow until we can get the mess under control that the members opposite created.

The facts of the matter are that the people in Saskatchewan, the business people in Saskatchewan, the farmers of Saskatchewan from the dry south-west to the other parts of the province, know the folly of the actions of the members opposite, recognize the need to deal with the crisis, and are willing to work with us in moving forward.

The pork industry has met with us and appreciates that there is an opportunity for growth. The biggest restriction to growth of the pork industry in Saskatchewan is access to capital for the building of facilities and for the ongoing maintenance of that. And the members opposite full well, if they know anything about agriculture, are aware of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, the minister proves he does not know whereof he speaks. That's exactly what the cash advance is being used for. That's exactly what the FeedGAP . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. Will the members please simmer down on both sides of the House, okay? On both sides, and we can have an orderly question period.

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Minister, that's exactly the point. I'm glad that you finally recognize it. You are now depriving these farmers their cash flow, the money that they have used to expand and to keep their operation running. You have just whipped out the rug from under them, sir.

Now Art Crone from Moose Jaw is saying, and I quote: What is he the minister to gain by shutting this place down.

He also said that his plans to expand production are put off. There's a question of whether he can even make his payments to ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan). In fact I've heard now that he's put a stop payment to ACS for \$580,000. That's what you are in jeopardy of losing for one farmer, Mr. Minister.

Now I'm going to ask you . . . and he also says it would be

better to move his animals to Alberta. That's what he says. That's a hog farmer. Mr. Minister, what do you say to Mr. Crone or do you not care that major operators in this province are seriously thinking about shutting down and/or moving out of this province? That's what you are creating, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I think the only negative vibes that come from Saskatchewan come from this cluster of members opposite who insist on looking for a grey lining in every circumstance. The member opposite is aware, he speaks with successful hog producers, that they are willing to take up the challenge of producing pork here because it is a good place to produce. The climate is conducive to it. The cost base in terms of feed supplies is conducive to it. And farmers have a spirit to compete in the world that the member ought to know about.

The member, being in the business, ought to also know the difference between operating money and capital expansion which I was talking about. The committee of pork producers who met with me who are major producers and who represent the industry, raised the point that what is very difficult for them to find is capital expansion for a new facility that might be worth a half a million dollars or a million dollars or a million and a half dollars. And they came forward with some constructive proposals to examine with us growth in the industry.

The member opposite ought to know that good business will build for the future and not sit there and dwell in the past, recognizing that we do not have the capacity to put money into operating costs, support that the members opposite are suggesting that we restore under this program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Mr. Minister, you answer questions like Leona Helmsley pays taxes, I'm afraid.

Now what I'm going to ask you now is why you are so intent on destroying rural Saskatchewan, citing the deficit as your be-all and your end-all in order to do that. You are mean-spirited, Mr. Minister, to livestock producers in your approach.

Now when I was a vice-chairman of Saskatchewan Pork Producers Marketing Board we had what was called SHARP (Saskatchewan hog assured returns program) in those days as support for the hog producers of this province. Now SHARP was in conjunction and with consultation of the Pork Board at that time and the members of the pork industry brought into the tripartite situation. But, Mr. Member, I say to you that during that time, within three to four weeks at the end and the close of a quarter, farmers had their cheques in the mail. Sir, right now with the FeedGAP program we are still waiting for our cheques from the first quarter of this year — January, February, March. We're in the middle of June.

The Speaker: — Order. Does the member have a

question?

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Minister, we are right now in the middle of June. In this highly computerized age you could easily have those cheques in the hands . . . after two weeks after the quarter.

Now, Mr. Minister, why are you maliciously and mischievously tightening the screws on Saskatchewan farmers so that you can have your own political agenda to take care of? Why are you doing that to the farmers of this province, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite would go out and talk to farmers, he would recognize that the farmers' biggest concern, as is the biggest concern of all other people in our province, is getting the debt under control, putting the province in a manageable state, recognizing that there is pain in that.

In the discussions we had with farmers in the south-west yesterday, they are fully understanding of the difficulties that a government faces, the difficulties which you placed us in. They recognize that we need to get on with the future and make the tough decisions, recognizing that we still have an additional \$517 million to deal with in terms of debt you've created, in terms of an annual basis. Knowing that we have a \$15 billion debt to repay, they're willing to face that task; they're willing to bring positive proposals to us instead of the negative ranting that comes from the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I invite the members opposite to stop the negative ranting and work with us in building a positive growth industry in Saskatchewan in agriculture and in all other areas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 49 — An Act to amend The Mortgage Protection Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Mortgage Protection Act.

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

Bill No. 50 — An Act to amend The Financial Administration Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Financial Administration Act.

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

Bill No. 51 — An Act to repeal The Heritage Fund (Saskatchewan) Act, to provide for the Winding-up of the Saskatchewan Heritage Fund and the Farm Purchase Program Fund and to enact Consequential Amendments to Certain Acts and Regulations resulting from the repeal

of that Act and the Winding-up of those Funds

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move first reading of a Bill to repeal The Heritage Fund (Saskatchewan) Act, to provide for the Winding-up of the Saskatchewan Heritage Fund and the Farm Purchase Program Fund and to enact Consequential Amendments to Certain Acts and Regulations resulting from the repeal of that Act and the Winding-up of those Funds.

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

Bill No. 52 — An Act to amend The Senior Citizens' Heritage Program Act

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I move that An Act to amend The Senior Citizens' Heritage Program Act be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

Bill No. 53 — An Act to amend The Farm Financial Stability Act

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Farm Financial Stability Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

(1415)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTION UNDER RULE 42

Drought Conditions Facing Livestock and Grain Producers in South-western Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Before orders of the day I rise pursuant to Rule 42 of this Assembly on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity. Our caucus has taken the time to contact the leaders of the opposition and the Liberal member of the legislature to seek leave. The issue is the disastrous situation facing livestock and grain producers in south-western Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, for those of us who have visited the area and seen the situation first hand, there is no doubt that these producers desperately need help and they need it now. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I seek leave to move the following motion:

That this Assembly recognizes the devastating drought conditions facing livestock and grain producers in south-western Saskatchewan, and requests the federal Minister of Agriculture to visit the area and to take steps to provide financial assistance to alleviate these disastrous circumstances.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the circumstance in

south-western Saskatchewan is certainly serious. We took a drive — a number of MLAs, ag caucus members and others — to visit first hand the farmers and the business people across southern Saskatchewan, to talk to them about the circumstances they are facing.

It is clearly distressing to watch your crops not come up; to watch the pastures dry up or never to green in the spring; to watch the water-holes evaporate and your water supply disappear; and to watch the feed stocks that you have, in spite of the fact that you had a very good stock of them last year, gradually to be used up in feeding your stock in the face of such a serious situation.

The situation is, thankfully, at this point restricted to the south-western part of Saskatchewan and . . . however it is also serious in the northern United States. And it is in fact true that the state of Montana has been declared a disaster area by the federal government of the United States. And it is that fact that has caused the farming people and the ranchers in the South to ask us to request of the federal government the same action.

From Mankota, west and south to the U.S. (United States) border, the situation is so critical that we ask and the farmers and ranchers ask that the federal Minister of Agriculture come to that area and see for himself the state of the drought that is causing farmers so much concern.

In the worst affected areas some grain crops are . . . up to as much as 50 per cent of the fields have not emerged and in some fields even more serious than that. Saskatchewan is taking action to help identify feed sources for farmers, pasture sources, and we are issuing a press release today asking farmers who have pastures that are not being used and who have feed supplies that would be available, to identify them to the provincial Department of Agriculture so that those who have the need will be able to have access and be able to find access as close as possible.

Farmers in the south-west and ranchers have already begun to move significant numbers of livestock out of the area. Farmers at Orkney when we met with them and the ranchers there, say that the four municipalities in which they live contain between 2 and 300,000 head of cattle which with proper support with possibly some access to water or some facilitation of pasture, they may be able to keep there this year, but for whom it creates a great deal of concern should this drought continue in terms of feed supplies next year when there is no carry-over grass and no carry-over feed.

Saskatchewan is in the critical situation of being bankrupted by the circumstances that the members opposite so well know. And at this time in our history we are beginning to pay back the federal government for a drought program that we committed ourselves to in 1988 under the previous administration.

We are now, while our farmers in the south-west are in need of drought assistance, paying the federal government \$15 million a year in order to pay back a debt created by the previous government, a debt they took on willingly, not recognizing the fact that this was a federal responsibility and that that kind of support is critical from the federal government if we want crisis intervention and

we want crisis support here. Because clearly when Saskatchewan is in a critical situation, it is not in a situation to fund its own disaster relief. Someone bleeding to death is not in a circumstance where they can give themselves a blood transfusion.

I ask the members opposite to join with us in asking the federal government to come and examine the situation, ask the federal minister to come and see for himself, to meet with the farmers as we did yesterday, and to bring forward positive support from the federal government so that our farmers may have some security that their livestock and their grain farms will be protected under these disastrous circumstances. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we have the order right here now, Mr. Speaker. And I want to compliment the minister on finally recognizing the fact that there is in fact a drought in south-west Saskatchewan.

We have taken some time in this Assembly to try to bring his attention to that matter over the past several weeks. And I want to compliment him for recognizing the problem and for recognizing the fact that the folks out there will need some help this year because we are in a devastating drought in some parts of the south-west corner and in some parts of my constituency.

It's an amazing thing how the weather treats people. We have, for example, a streak through our constituency where a few showers have gone. And the cereal crops are in not too bad a shape there. But the reality is that it was too late and far too little to assist the pastures and those kinds of things out there. For example, we have farms even where the cereal crops are not looking too bad where the drought so far is causing the dugouts to drop by at least 3 to 4 feet in those that had water in. And south of us and north of us, there's areas where there never was any water to begin with, so you don't have anything to evaporate. So it is getting to be a serious problem.

Now of course a large amount of rainfall would certainly help the situation, and we can all get together and pray that the good Lord will bring us some rainfall and that we can alleviate that problem in that way. It certainly would be a lot better than asking for assistance.

But in the meantime, we do have producers — and I've mentioned this before in the Assembly — that have already moved their cattle herds north. It's a very serious problem for people that live in a drought area, especially when it hits you consistently year after year. And like last year we had a pretty good year, but it's not enough to have one good year to make up all the bad ones and then be hit by another bad one where you have to spend more money shipping cattle out or bringing feed in. We've had just a real run of feed being brought in. People are starting to try to stockpile feed supplies as fast as they can, seeing that they won't have very much on their own properties this year.

Unfortunately that has in itself a devastating effect in that the price of feed goes up immediately. And we've already seen the prices of feed go up from \$45 a tonne to a hundred-and-some dollars being asked already in some places.

So while that's good for the fellows that are selling the hay to make their income, it is devastating for those people that have to buy it with an already shrunken amount of dollars in their cash flow. And it is especially hard on those producers that depend on programs like FeedGAP when they know very well that they won't be getting that assistance back out.

And so we see some very serious consideration going on in the area of people already saying that this fall we won't be putting any calves into our feedlots. We're probably best just to stay out. And we see an awful lot of investment dollars that were still available to buy calves and feed them in the area saying that they're simply not going to be invested here.

And so we have to build some confidence out there, and we do have to have some kind of assistance. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, in all fairness, when we ask for assistance from governments for a disaster, we should look at how this kind of thing is approached throughout the rest of North America in other kinds of disasters.

And the first step that is always taken is that the local authorities pitch in and do something to help out the folks that are in a disaster. The local rural municipalities, for example, will do everything they can with their limited resources. Then it moves to the provincial scene and the provincial government has to take a leadership role here and provide some assistance to those folks. Then the federal government is called upon. There is a tiering effect of assistance for disaster and you have to pitch in at every level.

You can't just go straight out and start yelling, federal government come in here and save our lives. They've got to see leadership by example. And leadership by example tips the folks off in Ottawa that there is a real problem. If you invest some provincial monies into the drought area, then the federal government is going to take you seriously and start to look at what really has to be done.

The minister alluded to the fact that this particular group on this side of the House, through his motion and his comments as well as earlier in the day, that this group in this House had no plan to help agriculture or wasn't doing anything. And I'd just like to comment a little bit on the kinds of things that the people on this side of the House have been proposing, and to show you that we are in a co-operative spirit in wanting to assist the provincial government to make those right decisions.

For example, in an agricultural strategy we have called for the federal government to implement and urgently review the need for further third line defence of assistance. Now the Leader of the Opposition has been there for farm families and rural communities — and I'm quoting from a farm strategy here — successfully obtaining billions of dollars of support from the federal government. He is Saskatchewan's single best hope for ensuring further assistance to protect those families and communities. The Leader of the Opposition is continuing negotiations with the federal government and recently released the text of a letter of the Hon. Bill McKnight, federal Minister of Agriculture, which called on Ottawa for 750 to 800

millions of dollars pay-out.

Now that statement was made last fall when in fact the Leader of the Opposition had been going to the federal government and was asking for assistance for farmers. So we haven't been shirking our responsibility and our duties to the people of Saskatchewan.

And we were looking at a disaster already at that time that was bigger than the drought that has become very important at this moment in the south-west. We were looking at a tragedy through the entire industry. But with that kind of a beginning, there could have been a follow-up so that you could have in place a strategy for the drought.

Now we said at that time that we must negotiate a five-year strategy with the federal government that addresses the third line of defence in a more concrete fashion, as well as other farm support mechanisms as Ottawa seriously takes on the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) challenge.

You see, we were trying to formulate at that time a strategy that wouldn't be just for one day or one week or one month or one drought. You have to deal with farm and agricultural problems as though it is an industry, and we sometimes forget to use that word: it is an industry.

It's not just a farmer over there or a group out there or somewhere else, and some of it are getting flooded out. It's all of the people that are involved in this business of producing food and distributing it to the people of our province and the country and around the world. And you have to have a long-term strategy, and that's what we were saying at that time and we say it still. We have to get into some long-term strategy programs. And we were calling on a five-year strategy approach to be used.

We talked about things like how to distribute the monies that farmers needed, and there are several vehicles you can and might use in order to distribute funds to farmers. The NISA accounts because they're new were handy, and they could have worked in order to do that.

It's unfortunate that every time we get into one of these new programs, we also build more bureaucracy and more red tape, and it becomes more and more difficult to get these programs to work in the kind of timely, fast manner that we need. And in this situation I would suggest that we wouldn't go that route because the drought problem that we're talking about in the south-west needs an immediate kind of an attention — the kind of an attention, I think, that would call on the provincial government here to look at some the ideas of assistance to moving cattle, assistance to moving feed stocks into place.

(1430)

There's nothing new about these, Mr. Speaker. These are all old ideas, but they're ideas that have been used in a time-tested way in the area of drought where it has happened before in the past. And so I think what we have to do is look back at history and dig up those programs and plans that worked well before, and re-use them and

revisit them to the communities that need them. And we do need that assistance.

And it's amazing how this spring we watched the grass out in the hills not really turn green. Instead of going from a sort of a winter brownish colour, it went to a kind of a funny white grey. And of course when that happens you know that the root systems are in serious trouble. And what happens with native grass is that they go into a kind of a dormant stage, and they will in fact revive when rain comes and they will relive.

Tame hay and feeds are not quite so persistent in drought. And when they take on that colour, often the plants die and the farmers have to reseed them. So you have to revisit some of the old ideas of bringing in seeding programs, assistance for grass seed to reseed after the drought is over, and if it happens to start raining, to replace those plants. And I would suggest to the government that they take some serious looks at that kind of an approach in the drought area, because certainly there won't be enough plants there if this drought continues for much longer where the tame seed grasses are.

We also suggested as far back as last fall that the grain handling industry must be designated an essential service. And I think that that would be important to do at this time too, Mr. Speaker, because the members opposite to us have suggested that we didn't have any ideas and that we're not being co-operative. Well we're offering you some ideas and we're offering you some co-operation in helping you to bring these programs into effect.

And there are considerable amounts of preamble in here that we could offer to the members opposite quite easily, if they would like to have it because we certainly want to share these ideas for the benefit of people in agriculture.

We also said at that time that the provincial government will continue its abeyance of legal actions against cash-starved farmers by ACS until both interim GRIP payments were made. And that kind of an approach should be revisited as well, Mr. Speaker, because obviously those farmers and producers in south-west Saskatchewan are among those many in the province who have ACS loans to pay and those kind of debts that they will have to face with no production of grass or hay or feed this year. And if the crops are gone, the same thing applies to the grain farmers. And if they can't make their payments on these ACS loans, we'll have to revisit some of these old ideas of attempting to alleviate for those farmers the needs to make those payments this year because they simply won't be able to do it.

And I don't think it's really the best for the government to use the non-payment of ACS loans as a vehicle to become the owners of farm land. I think probably enough institutions already own enough land that it's probably time that we took a little bit easy on foreclosures and did something in that area, because it's going to become a serious situation especially in light of the announcement that the livestock cash advances will no longer be interest free.

And you're going to find an awful lot of ranchers and livestock producers out there that are simply not going to be able to pay the interest on these advances that they have. And had they not gone through some serious years before and could simply say, well we'll now pay these loans back, that would be simple. The truth of the matter is that we've had some difficult recessionary times in agriculture, and these folks just simply don't have the cash flow to be able to pay this money back.

So in view of the fact that they can't pay it back, are going to have to pay interest now on top of everything else, their operations are in serious jeopardy of foreclosure. And I want to suggest most emphatically that the government should take a look at its provincial program here and perhaps stay this idea for another year, of putting interest on the livestock cash advances.

It is a suggestion for you to consider. And if you are suggesting, as you did before, that we are non-co-operative and that we are not trying to assist you, then we want you to take a look at the proposals that we're giving you. We're making suggestions to you of a way to solve some of the problems out there in this serious drought area, as well as in the cash short area of the rest of the province. You might want to back up a step and cancel some of your plans to come in so hard on agriculture and agricultural producers and give them a year's breathing space or maybe even longer.

We have made suggestions, Mr. Speaker, about the Saskatchewan land transfer agencies. We've talked about water works in Saskatchewan as far back as last fall. And I think we should visit that old plan for a minute again.

In the past the administration of our province has worked in conjunction with the PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration) and other groups like that to provide assistance to producers to get water for their farms and for their livestock.

You could introduce a program such as the one that was in place before, where 40 millions of dollars, I think it was, was put into a fund to assist farmers with the digging of dugouts and the digging of new wells.

If we're going to look at any kind of assistance where we bring feed in or attempt to help producers to keep their livestock herds up, we also have to provide water for those animals. And in those areas where the dugouts are going dry and if the water tables are dropping, then you also have to visit this plan of producing some water and having water available.

Now this may mean going into some deep-well digging or that type of thing and this gets very expensive, Mr. Speaker. It can cost the farmer 20 or \$30,000 to dig one well if he has to go down to the 300 or 600 foot level in order to find water.

And so I want the members opposite to take a minute to think about the possibility of bringing in some programs that will assist producers out there with the digging of new water wells and the expansion of, the cleaning out of, or the digging of new dugouts, and those kinds of things that might help — even pipelines.

We had in the past many programs where there were water pumps with a whole great deal of pipe made available by the Department of Agriculture or the Department of Rural Development. I'm not sure which department handled it, but they had these pumps and pipes available and they were leased out to the farmers.

It could be done through the municipalities to keep track of the equipment. I'm sure that everyone out there would co-operate in the handling of these programs.

Dugouts were filled from rivers many miles away in some cases. And it's a difficult operation, it's a lot of work, but the farmers and the producers out there were willing in the past to do that kind of thing. And I'm quite certain that they would be willing to do it again if the government would make those things available to the producers.

So there's another idea for you. It's not real expensive, because I think that most likely those pumps and those pipes are still available out in the country, stored somewhere. You could dig that program up out of the moth-balls; revisit it to the communities that are hit by drought and provide them with that opportunity to be able to pump water from the rivers or from wherever there is.

You could assist with a bit of mileage for those people maybe that have to load tanks on trucks to haul water and that kind of approach could be of some assistance to the producers out there.

We have suggested in the past that \$13.1 billion was brought into this province over the past 10 years through diplomacy and negotiation. It wasn't a confrontational approach that got those dollars, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to suggest to the members opposite in our government that if they want truly to get money from the federal government, they won't get it by going and metaphorically kicking them in the knee. If you want to get money from the federal government, you're going to have to show a spirit of co-operation.

If you want to do as well, dealing with the federal government on behalf of farmers and agricultural producers throughout this province, as was done in the past, you will have to revisit your plans of how you're approaching this whole situation and this whole area of attempting to convince the government in Ottawa that you are worth helping, that you as a provincial government are worth taking a look at and assisting farmers.

So the responsibility falls on the administration here to go back to Ottawa and eat a little crow, if that's what it takes, and maybe apologize for some of the actions that have been taken in the last few months and start over. Because there certainly is an adversarial fever developing between this provincial government and our federal government, especially in the area of assistance for agricultural producers.

And that fever has got to be controlled and put out somehow. Someone is going to have to do that proverbial

old thing and eat some crow and back up and apologize and restart this whole process of negotiations. Because otherwise you will never see that \$13 billion of assistance that this province is going to have to have for agricultural producers in the next four or five years, if you're going to have any industry left at all, as we are heading into the direction that we seem to be going, with the GATT talks not really be resolved and some good possibilities that they may not be resolved. And if that happens, we're going to be in serious trouble and we're going to have to talk real nice to the fellows down in Ottawa.

I hope that the GATT thing goes well for us, that the price of wheat goes up to \$8 a bushel, and that cattle go up to \$2 a pound. But I don't think it's going to happen. So you're going to have to face the reality that we're going to have to stick around maybe with our hat in hand and talk nicely to Ottawa. And I think you have to show leadership here at the provincial level in order to get that kind of assistance started.

It cannot be a confrontational approach. We must do it with quiet diplomacy and politeness.

Sometime back we have 57,000 farmers that received \$1.1 billion through the 1986 production loan program. A lot of people felt that that program was very good. There were some that said no, it wasn't that good because it gave us money too easily and we found that we spend it too easily.

And I think that's a fair assessment, as I remember my days working with counselling and assistance for farmers and visiting some farmers who found themselves in some financial troubles. And they said that one of the problems was that they hadn't learned to use the money they were borrowing in the right way yet. They were so used to having easy dollars coming in in the '70s and the early '80s that they hadn't realized that a recession caused a very great difficulty in paying back some of those dollars. But for most of the farmers, this money was used wisely and correctly and it kept them going for a couple of years.

Mr. Speaker, I can show you example after example after example of people that took that money, paid down high interest loans, loans that they had got caught up in in the early '80s at 18 and 20 and up as high as 24 per cent interest. They paid off the principal on those loans, restructured their loans, and got them back into a realistic range that they could afford to live with.

One producer that I know of, and obviously I won't name his name, but he had \$50,000 worth of increase in his cost in one year from the increase on his interest rates — in one year, in the early 1980s. And that's how the agricultural sector was devastated by high interest rates.

In 1986 that production program helped people to be able to bail out of a lot of those bad interest rate loans and get them into reduced amounts. And that's important, Mr. Speaker. And it might be time for us to address a program — I'm not saying exactly like that one, but something along that line — to allow people to bring down their principal amounts of money owed to the banks so that they can restructure their loans at today's lower interest rates.

There are a lot of producers paying 11, 12, even 15 per cent interest. In fact I think I know of one case where it's likely 16 yet. And if they could revisit those bankers with some cash money that they could say, we're going to use this to restructure our loans and get down to a 6 or 7 per cent interest rate, then they would be in much healthier financial shape. So there's another thing that you can take a look at as a point of how to address the serious problems that we have, not only in the drought area but in the entire area of agricultural production.

Back in the 1980s we had farmers saving over \$388 million in interest payments through interest reduction programs, Mr. Speaker. Here again was the government's approach to the problems in agriculture. Instead of increasing power rates, instead of increasing telephone rates, instead of increasing all of the fixed costs that producers have to pay, the government of the day decided to assist farmers with interest rates, because when it was at 18 per cent and all those kinds of crazy high numbers, that's where the people needed assistance and that's where they got their assistance. And I think the government really should take a close look at some of those ideas.

(1445)

In 1984 — I mentioned to you the counselling and assistance for farmers program — and at that time it had reviewed . . . last year up to 6,000 applications had been received and we had loan guarantees for 3,700 farmers for a total of 343 millions of dollars that were invested in the program to assist producers in this province. And we haven't seen one program, Mr. Speaker, out of this government in its seven months of administration — not one program that assists agriculture in any way.

All we see before us is Bills cancelling all of the programs that were ever there before. And a lot of these programs have been cancelled, not through legislation but through orders in cabinet or orders in council or whatever they call them, but they just swept them away and they're gone.

And then they say to us that they want our co-operation in helping to alleviate the problem. And we're here to say that we're going to suggest to you that a lot of the programs of the past could be redesigned to match the needs of today and brought back in by this government.

And so we're going to suggest, Mr. Speaker, to this government, that they do some of these things and assist not only the people in the drought area but all of the producers in Saskatchewan. Two hundred million dollars through the agriculture development fund was provided. We had \$157 million in the spring seeding loans, just in one year, to help farmers.

And you may have to look at those kinds of investments, not only in grass seed, but you may have to go out and start looking at investing some of that kind of money into a reseeding program for this year. In the cereal crops in those areas where the drought is so severe, those producers probably don't have the wherewithal financially to be able to go out and put more seed in the

ground.

And even though it's getting quite late in the season to get a cereal crop, if you do get a rain and you can find some dollars to put seed in the ground, you can plant some crops that will give you crop growth and stop the soil from blowing away through the rest of the summer and next winter and on into next spring.

And that's a very serious situation that has to be addressed very quickly, because if those producers don't get that seeding done immediately after any rain that does come, you will lose the opportunity — the window of opportunity — to get some growth on that land to stop serious soil erosion from wind and whatever else comes along through the fall and the winter.

So I urge the government to look strongly at providing the necessity that is required to bring seed to those farmers and the cash flow that they would need to be able to put that seed in, in order to keep that soil erosion problem from developing. And it's got to be there, ready to be triggered on a minute's notice, as soon as a shower comes by.

We saw programs like \$140 million in loans to the livestock producers through ACS livestock cash advance programs. And I talked to you a minute ago about that. And you really have to consider the position you've taken of putting the interest rates on those programs, especially in light of this disaster that you have just yourself declared with this very motion. You've declared there's an emergency and cash flow is going to be a part of that emergency, and piling interest rates onto those cash advances at this time is certainly not going to alleviate the problem.

So rethink it, consider your thoughts here, and maybe you can put it off for a year or two and help those producers in those areas.

Over a \$115 million through crop and livestock drought programs was provided, and we have now another drought program. So maybe it's time to look at things like the crop insurance program and extending to those producers 100 per cent coverage instead of 80 per cent. Maybe we'd better take a look at some of those things that were done before in those drought areas, things that worked for the producers then and brought about some cash flow in those areas. There's another suggestion for you.

Over \$100 million in the past to farmers through various *ad hoc* programs, and you know very well that there is in the budget \$150 million that we managed to get a commitment from the minister the other day by questions. There's \$150 million in contingency for emergencies into the budget, and we're calling on you now to take a look at that 150 million that we managed to get you to admit that it was there in the budget. It's available yet without creating any more deficit. And that is the money that we think that you should target now to the drought area. And do it in whatever *ad hoc* way you have to, to help those producers, but think of something and do it fairly soon.

Ninety-two million dollars went to our agricultural colleges and institutes, and these are the kinds of plans that were designed for that long-term strategy that we talked about a few minutes ago. The kind of long-term strategy where you study and research what you're going to do in a strategy to help all of agriculture, what you're going to do to fight things like drought, what you would do to fight things like too much rainfall, perhaps. And the University of Saskatchewan certainly used that money for good advantage in providing the buildings that were needed up there and the kind of research that is ongoing and necessary for our industry.

We had the feeder association loan program, the guaranteed programs. And here we had 72.5 millions of dollars that was offered in loans back in those days, and those feeder associations, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to you, worked very well in the feeding industry. Along with putting our province in a competitive position with Alberta with the FeedGAP program, the feeder association loan program provided producers the opportunity to be able to get the loans necessary to buy the livestock to put into their own small feedlots and keep those cattle at home to feed.

Now we have to consider, Mr. Speaker, in a situation where we have a declared disaster in drought, we have to consider the possibility of bringing not only this program into an updated position to help producers to get the money they'll need to keep those calves here this fall, but we're going to have to revisit that problem that the FeedGAP not being here is causing as we get uncompetitive with Alberta and the Americans and Manitoba again.

We once again find ourselves in a trough in the middle of this country where we are not competitive with our neighbours. I'm not saying that what Alberta has done is right or fair. The fact that they have done it, though, makes it absolutely incumbent upon us to be competitive by producing the same playing-field for our producers.

And if we don't do that, we're going to not only see a drop of 10 cents a pound in our calves this fall — which I'm predicting will happen because of the FeedGAP cancelling — but we will see all of the calves leaving this province and none will be fed this year. And that means that there will be a lot of producers without work, not only for themselves but for those people that they employ. It also means a loss of the spin-off of the industries in packing plants and all the other things.

And you've heard it all before. But you've got to be reminded, I think, because somehow you seem to have forgotten the effects that all of this can have on the entire base of our taxation in our province. You've killed one industry and it ripples into other industries. And when you ship all of the calves out of Saskatchewan to somewhere else, then you lose all of the spin-offs that go with killing of beef and pork or whatever animals you're talking about and the whole related industry.

And in the drought area, Mr. Speaker, you're going to have to take an even better look at this situation and give more attention to it, because now you have the added weight of drought with no cash flow. The feed grain

adjustment program put out \$9.3 million of assistance to livestock producers up to last fall. That was a major commitment to the industry that it made it survive where otherwise it would have been gone.

We had all kinds of plans to assist rural people, and I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that there are some very fundamental things that could help even in a drought area that don't relate directly to drought assistance. For example, if you had helped the people that don't have natural gas on their farms and ranches out in the places that are far away from the urban centres, they could save a lot of money on their heating costs for their houses and shops and that sort of thing.

And that program is still not finished. I had a request just the other day from farmers out west of Gull Lake who had applied for two years now to get the natural gas line put in and they were just on the verge of getting that program to go ahead when the present government took power and it went on hold. Those producers, if they could get natural gas, could save half of their heating costs and this would greatly help them, not only in drought years but for years and years to come if they could get that program back into place. I happen to know that this is a good program because I put this particular natural gas line project to use on my farming operation and it did in fact cut the costs in half to heat our farm home.

We have had things like the breeder association loan guarantee program and a whole bunch of other ideas that we have listed here. And, Mr. Speaker, we want this government to know that we have a lot of ideas that we're willing to share about how to help this drought situation and how to help the entire agricultural situation in our province because the problem is a big one.

And we've got to think of ideas to do that because the minister just a few minutes ago got up and said that we weren't co-operative, that we weren't giving him ideas or assisting him. Well we're going to give you a whole bunch of ideas, and we're going to show you how we will help you to get these ideas into place to help the people in rural Saskatchewan, not only in the drought area but more specifically there than other areas right now because that's the immediate problem. But we want a long-term strategy from you. We want a long-term look at how we're going to solve this problem for a long time to come.

Now we've got investment loan programs. The past administration put up \$6 million to establish large-scale hog operations. And what have we seen from the government opposite to encourage hog production in the last few days here? We've seen the FeedGAP cancelled and almost totally devastate any plans of expansion in the hog industry.

You've got to take a look, I think, at things like the drought area as being a good target area to put some money into to encourage that kind of diversification. If you have farmers that have a hog barn and can produce some hogs and bring some grain in, then they can get cash flow out of that diversified enterprise on their farm, and they don't have to be totally dependent on the weather outside on each individual year.

And so you have to rethink the idea of perhaps putting some money into investments to help people to diversify in those areas where drought and other kinds of disaster hit and especially in those areas where they happen to hit frequently.

And so you've got to look not only at those programs, but we've got to also start looking at spending some time on the international centres and on the international scene. We've got to look at science and technology and getting people with intelligence in the industry to go to the places like the GATT talks and visit people and try to straighten out some of these long-term problems.

If these farmers all had money in the bank because things were going right in the last few years, you wouldn't have probably even heard of them this one year because farmers are a tough group of people who put a dollar away when they've got one. The trouble is that they don't have any dollars left because every dollar they saved in the '70s and early '80s is now gone. And the recession has cleaned their bank accounts out, and now there aren't any dollars left to fight off a bad year. So they have to be here, hat in hand immediately, and what we've got to do is get a long-term strategy that puts some dollars back into the agricultural bank accounts.

We've had the save our soils program, Mr. Speaker, working in our area for some time. And I should imagine that an awful lot of the producers that are involved in this drought right now are really happy that they're involved with that particular program, because they will have their soil protected with residue as a result of having followed the good management practices that goes with a program like the save our soils program.

Unfortunately not everyone will be in that situation because a lot of fields are open now with the cultivation having been required to accomplish the job of spring seeding. And when you seed your crop in the spring and if it doesn't come up or if it comes up and dies off because of the drought, then the soil is opened up. The trash is basically buried, and we're going to have a very serious problem.

So I think we have to look at the long-term strategy of helping the save our soils programs and programs like that so that they continue to work. The no-till seeding type of approach with the chem-fallow programs and those kinds of things are very necessary especially in our drought area. And this government should look at expanding its assistance in those areas.

We've had a lot of money spent in the rural areas, Mr. Speaker, in areas like underground power lines. And you'll say, well what difference would that make? Well let me tell you what happens out in a drought area with power lines if you happen to get a freak storm, and that's when you get these freak storms is in a drought situation. The thunder and lightening storms are produced by heat that rises from the ground and creates the disturbances upstairs, and the lightning strikes that knock down an overhead power line can cause terrible fires throughout the country.

And the underground power program that the past administration put into this province spent several millions of dollars, and it helped an awful lot of farmers to get the underground power program. And those lines of course are much safer, and I think our government should be reminded that here's another idea where they could expand and work to help rural Saskatchewan by completing that program. If many more miles of that power line was underground, we wouldn't be facing the possibility of all these fires from lightning strikes on the power lines.

(1500)

We have in our province 72 rural development corporations, Mr. Speaker. And those are important to rural people because here again we talk about a diversification, and we want to encourage this administration to pursue that line of thinking of providing these kinds of diversifications for our communities.

There are all kinds of things that you can do. You can get away from ideas like a land bank and help people to own their own land and to keep it by revisiting the ideas of cancelling some of the interest rates on ACS loans. You could assist with those folks that have interest rates in other areas as well. And you can provide all kinds of support for people in agriculture that can help them to get through a drought period of time so that they can feel confident to go on with another year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I spoke at some length here about the situation in terms of what the government can do and some ideas that ran through my head that we have provided.

And we want the government to know that we are willing not only to offer these suggestions to you but we are more than willing to help you to bring them into place. We are not unco-operative in the area of assisting agricultural producers in the drought area. We are more than happy and more than willing to do anything that we have to, to bring some assistance to this area.

And all of these kinds of suggestions and every other one that anyone can think of should be re-examined and relooked at, and some attempt made to bring these things into place so that the producers in those drought areas can in fact survive this drought period. It's an extremely difficult time for them, Mr. Speaker, and our hearts go out to them. And we certainly will co-operate with this government to find whatever is necessary to help them through this difficult period of time. Thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was anxious to speak on this resolution and I thank the member from Maple Creek for being . . . sticking right to the point and not using up all the time here.

I'm anxious to speak to this, Mr. Speaker, because the disaster situation that the minister spoke of, it's right in the heart of the Shaunavon constituency, the constituency I represent. And I spent last Monday out driving through

the constituency — pretty well the full day in the Frontier area — meeting with the RMs (rural municipalities) and many farm groups and groups of ranchers that would come in and discuss their situations with me.

And in touring some of the Frontier area and south on Monday, what I saw was real depressing. You know, the crops they're pretty much shot and the pasture situation . . . the dugouts are dry. There's no water or very little water. The pastures down there, there's very little grazing. They're not going to be able to sustain any carrying capacity of the cattle for very long.

And what I noticed, Mr. Speaker, was the concern that these farmers and ranchers had down in that area is genuine. They are very concerned that they're perhaps going to have to sell cattle. And what bothers myself, Mr. Speaker, is I don't know if they'll ever be able to get back in if they get out of the cattle industry this year.

They had a great deal of feed to carry over from last year and many of these people had not even stopped feeding from last winter. It looks like they'll have to continue to feed right on through the summer. And of course their stocks, their feedstocks, are going to be way down.

And, Mr. Speaker, they have . . . a large number of the farmers and ranchers are already shipping cattle out. It's a situation that we're monitoring and we got to keep right on top of this.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday we had about seven or eight of my colleagues and the Minister of Agriculture in the Shaunavon constituency for the full day. We met in Mankota and had a meeting there with the two RMs from that area; had a real good meeting too. The people, they brought forward their concerns, and we talked openly about the positive and negatives of past programs, whether it be hauling feed into these areas or hauling the cattle out or pellets. And we talked on the pros and cons. It was just a real positive meeting.

And there too, their pastures all across the south, they're in the same situation. Areas that were very spotty with the rains, they're having a serious water shortage down there. We talked about whether we could have . . . or work in conjunction with PFRA to get back to a well-drilling program or have the RMs into a well-drilling program with PFRA, or assistance in digging of dugouts.

But what we noticed there once again was the farmers and ranchers are . . . the meetings are so positive. They are very appreciative that we're coming out to see the situation and stay right on top of it and see what we can make of it.

From Mankota, Mr. Speaker, we travelled over to the area in Val Marie. And some of my friends in the Val Marie area that ranch and farm down there, they were able to take us and show us some of these pasture areas and crops. There too it's no different. In fact I think from Mankota, the further to the west you go, the worse it gets.

What we did have a chance to look at, Mr. Speaker, was the Masfield community pasture, which I spoke on in this legislature about ten days, two weeks ago. That was

the pasture that had the fire. It's neighbouring the Grasslands Park. And at that time I'd asked the members opposite to join in and support the need of those people in that area to perhaps have emergency grazing in the Grasslands Park.

And we drove out and took a look at where the fire had been. It's black for miles, as far as you can see. And the pastures, nearby pastures, are gone or near gone at this point because of the drought. And here right beside we have Grasslands Park and areas in that park there the grass is knee-high or higher and not being grazed at all.

And I still am going to ask the members opposite to do what they can to lobby their federal counterparts to perhaps allow emergency grazing in that Grasslands Park. I've received word back from Bill McKnight, the federal Minister of Agriculture, that he has referred the matter to the Environment minister. So if the members opposite would please get a hold of the Environment minister and do what they can, not for political reasons but for reasons that the ranchers down there need a place to put the 1,200 head of cattle affected and just set politics aside and give us a hand on this one, I know the ranchers in that area would really appreciate that from you.

Mr. Speaker, we know how serious the drought is, but the member from Maple Creek spoke of off-loading. What he didn't allude to was some of the federal off-loading that our federal government has been doing onto this province over the last nine and a half, ten years and how they were allowed to do it because the members opposite, some of those members, were in government at that time and not only allowed it to happen, but supported it.

I look back at things like the 1981-82 Crow freight rate, the fixed rate. It was members opposite that fought the New Democrat government of the day to do away with that fixed rate. And here we are on the slippery slope now. They're backing their federal counterparts in allowing the Crow benefit to be in danger now. They spent the winter having meetings all along the south line, all throughout the province. And the people down there have a fear that if we allow them to go ahead and change the method of payment on the freight rate, what we're going to see is the abandonment of rail lines down there.

And what the members opposite have to realize, these communities down there that's their lifeline, Mr. Speaker. They're 40 and 50 miles apart, some of those communities, and that railroad is just all too important. And we, I think, as Saskatchewan producers and government, we have got to stick together on this one and make sure that the method of payment remains being paid to the railways so that we don't have a change in where the lines are and putting others in jeopardy, Mr. Speaker.

Also I notice that the members opposite when the Free Trade Agreement was being forced upon us by the federal government, the members opposite, they supported that. In fact they campaigned rather vigorously for it.

An Hon. Member: — Go talk to Mike Harcourt about it.

Mr. McPherson: — I notice the member from Thunder Creek now speaking about that. But he helped support that with his premier. They toured not only the province but they toured Canada, Mr. Speaker. And what we lost out of that Free Trade Agreement was a two-price wheat system which brought in another 200, \$250 million to this province or to the grain system as a whole.

And I didn't see the member from Thunder Creek at that time arguing for the farmers. He was arguing more for the Free Trade Agreement, which the effects of the agreement are being felt, but the positive effects I and others around the province have yet to appreciate them.

Mr. Speaker, I look down at some of my notes here at other federal off-loading. And I see another one that the members on this side of the House had to fight and fight hard to keep was the interest-free cash advance. And the federal government tried to pull away from the interest-free cash advance. And the members on that side of the House, the members opposite, they weren't in support of that.

But it was through a lot of lobbying from the members on this side and from the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool that we were actually able to keep that program in place, a much-needed program, especially at a time when the farmers are in such a cash flow crisis that interest-free cash advance is all too important. And I hope we have put that to rest, but I can't be sure.

And there again I'll have to ask the two members that are talking right now opposite that perhaps they should join with us for once. And do it for the farmers, do it for the people that actually need that cash flow, and give us a hand to support the people that it means most to. And just stop playing politics with that one.

I also see that when there were changes to the crop insurance, the federal government did a great deal of off-loading for the costs of operating the crop insurance program. And the federal government at one time funded the crop insurance by some 50 per cent, and they reduced their level of support to 25 per cent, putting the onus on the province and onto the producer.

Well there again the members of this government, the members of this party, they fought hard to make sure that wouldn't happen or try to stop it. But yet the government of the past, the members opposite when they were in government, they didn't fight for that. And it meant so much to Saskatchewan producers, yet they weren't there backing the producers. They allowed that to happen. They were more interested in *ad hoc*-ery instead of being out there and defending long-term programs which today mean so much.

Another one, Mr. Speaker, I see was the western grain stabilization where the feds also off-loaded. And in that program, Mr. Speaker, they were paying I think it was \$2 for every dollar that the producer put into the program.

And I know I spoke on this last week also, but here we now have the federal government sending out bills from the western grain stabilization, asking that farmers — and for the most part, farmers in Saskatchewan — to repay

\$41 million that they say is an overpayment in the western grain stabilization fund. When in fact, Mr. Speaker, it was a full year ago that some of the members opposite were actually going around in preparation in the campaign and saying that, oh well, there'll be a \$500 million western grain stabilization pay-out. And not to confuse that with the third line of defence argument they were using at the same time, another \$500 million third line of defence argument.

(1515)

Well there again the farmers in this province, that \$41 million that we're being asked to repay . . . and I brought forward an emergency resolution on that Friday before last, stating that we will pay that 41 million but we want the \$459 million that they are still short, because it was promised. It was promised for election reasons. Well now we want help from the members opposite to get that from the federal government, get that money. We consider it, and the farmers consider it, to still be owing. And we ask them for their support on that one.

Mr. Speaker, I look at what's happened during the '80s, and what I saw were 1985 and 1988, two years in which we had serious drought in this province, and in both of those years some of the members opposite were in government. And at that time, Mr. Speaker, they had no problem in having their premier fly down to Ottawa and ask for help, specific help just because of the drought, over and above any government programs of the day.

And that is what we're going to ask once again, Mr. Speaker. If they found it in their hearts and if they knew that the crisis was severe in '85 and '88, that they would take part in asking and lobbying the federal government for monies then, surely they weren't doing it for just political reasons or to try and get re-elected.

But I ask them once again, take part. Take part in this and share in getting some money for this drought area. By and large it's not a huge area but it is so severe, Mr. Speaker.

When we left the Val Marie area and went over to Orkney we had a meeting with about four RMs and a concerned group for a few hours. It was another positive meeting but we had a good look at the crops. The further west we went the worse it got. Some of those crops, Mr. Speaker, only a third to a half of them ever germinated. It just looks terrible and these guys do need the help down there. There's no question they need the help.

And that's what we're asking here today, is that we all join together and see if we can't get the federal Minister of Agriculture, Bill McKnight, out here to view the situation, to see if he can't find it in his heart to come up with some money now instead of waiting for an election.

And there's no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that they have money. I take a look at the GST (goods and services tax) that they're charging. Well when they first wanted to bring in the GST they were talking of some \$10 billion net revenue from the GST. It wasn't too long into that argument and that figure rose then to some \$18 billion. And yet I noticed when the federal budget come down that 18 billion net revenue didn't show up in there.

I, like a lot of people in the province, are very suspect that perhaps there's money being set aside to try and win the next federal election. I hope that perhaps they could just find it in their hearts to perhaps reach into their pockets and help out now when an area such as the south-west needs this help.

It's all important, the cash flow crisis, Mr. Speaker, as the minister stated before and I've said is severe down there. There's got to be something done for the feed and the cattle but money's so short you're looking at a thousand dollars a load to bring feed in and nobody has that kind of money, Mr. Speaker.

I noticed also . . . We were all along the south line right along the 49th parallel looking at some of the crops and pastures — and a few miles south of where we were at one point in the state of Montana they had the same situation, the drought goes for many miles. But I see there that the state has declared it . . . a state of emergency is being declared in that state. And the federal government, the federal U.S. government is looking at providing funds to assist their farmers and ranchers and that's over and above any programs that they have also. So if the States can find it in their hearts to have their federal government support their state's cause on behalf of the farmers and ranchers, that's all we ask of the members opposite, to join with us and get the Minister of Agriculture out here, take a look at this area, and let's get something done.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is very important to some of the members opposite because they are representing south-western constituencies as I am, and I'm just going to ask them once more to please share with us and support all the measures necessary to get the job done. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that there are several other members who wish to speak to the resolution this afternoon, therefore I'll keep my comments brief and to the point.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the motion that this Assembly recognizes the devastating drought conditions facing livestock and grain producers in south-western Saskatchewan and request the federal Minister of Agriculture to visit the area and take steps to provide financial assistance to alleviate these disastrous circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, natural disasters like drought are unpredictable. In fact if they were predictable, they wouldn't exist. It is difficult to assess these disasters unless they are observed first hand, such as the member indicated the delegation and the visit that went into this area yesterday.

I speak from experience when I talk about drought, because in 1980 and 1988 I was in that very same situation, only on a much smaller scale in terms of the provincial drought situation. And it's not an easy issue to deal with when you're affected. And I understand the feelings and the emotions and the stress that farmers in the

affected areas are experiencing at this particular time.

I also represent an area of the province where we have the opposite problem this spring. In fact there are still many farmers in my area that have not completed seeding, and I'm one of those, for the simple reason that it's just simply too wet, and we've had an ample amount of moisture. And I suppose if we could do things that we wanted to do, if it were possible to do, it would be great to move this moisture 3 to 400 miles to the west of our province and allow them to enjoy some of that much-needed moisture and rainfall.

Mr. Speaker, the government role is to protect residents and producers in times of disaster. Such a time has arrived for the producers in south-west Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I urge the co-operation of all members of the House and other producers and employers in the industry to help wherever they can. For example, I see tonnes of hay in my area spoiling, sitting in sloughs of water, that perhaps could be used in case of emergency for the cattle producers in the stricken part of the province.

Provincially we can't handle the situation by ourselves. We need everyone's support including, and especially, the federal government. We need their co-operation and assistance in addressing this problem. My colleague had mentioned, south of the border the affected states — those states affected by drought — will be receiving assistance from their federal government. Our farmers are no less important than our neighbours to the south.

I remind you it is an urgent situation. These producers have to have peace of mind on the issue. And we need to show solid, unified support for such an emergency disaster program. I urge all members to rally together to show the federal government that we are serious about the situation our producers are in and that we do need their help to address their needs. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kluz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm glad I have the opportunity to enter in this debate to try to convince the federal Minister of Agriculture to come and take a look at the situation in the south-western corner of the province. Certainly these people are facing some very tough times ahead.

And talking about tough times, I've spoken in this Assembly before how when my grandfather settled here, when he first started to farm, he had to borrow seed from his neighbours and he was hauled out. He had to go back to those same neighbours again, only the next year to be hauled out again, so going back to those neighbours the third time to get seed to seed his crop — definitely went through some tough times, those early settlers.

And there was no government help at all at those times. I can remember my parents in the late '60s and the very early '70s when wheat, the price of wheat wasn't worth anything and there was a three bushel quota. It was very tough times. I remember we used to milk seven cows at that time just to put some food on the table and some clothing so we could go to school.

So what those people in the south-west are facing right now, I'm sure it's very emotional and some very tough times, they're thinking, ahead. So they definitely need some help from the rest of the province and from the rest of this country.

I remember that we used to have a two-price wheat system, and it was negotiated at that time — probably lost because the free trade deal with the United States. But at that time the federal government had stated that all farmers would be receiving a subsidy or a payment equal to one-year price of what the two-price wheat system would have brought. But personally I have not seen that payment and none of my constituents have. It was just a case of another promise made and another promise broken.

And I rose in this Assembly before, and I had stated that prior to last fall's election, I phoned western grain stabilization personally and they had told me that yes there is probably going to be a huge pay-out. And the rumour was going around it was going to be some place around 500 million final payment on the western grain stabilization. After the election was over I phoned them again and they had said, we miscalculated, the payment is going to be much, much smaller. And by this spring we found out exactly how much smaller — in fact there was an overpayment.

It seems that there was another miscalculation, a big miscalculation. Was it maybe the fact that there was an election happening in the province of Saskatchewan where the federal government wanted their allies re-elected, and they were just playing games with farmers again? So now the farmers have \$41 million to pay back to the western grain stabilization plan.

And it's not only going to hurt the farmers, it's going to hurt all sectors of this society. You've taken 41 million directly out of Saskatchewan's economy. And we've repeatedly called for it to the feds, is to take that 41 million overpayment and deduct it from the 500 million they owe the farmers — the 500 million they promised on third line of defence — and immediately pay the balance.

That would certainly help some of the producers. It's not the total answer but it certainly would help in this time of need.

(1530)

Then when I listen to some of the members opposite I hear them talking about the production loan and the spring seeding loan. No doubt that helped some producers out. But I am receiving countless, countless calls on this about: I can't make my payments; I wish I wouldn't have taken that loan. It seems like every time there's a band-aid solution comes up, it may help the problem for a little while but it isn't the overall solution.

We do need a national policy. And when I hear some other members talking in this House about the two-price wheat system, no doubt in my mind, it helped out eastern Canada more than it did the West. It's time now for co-operation that the West and East can work out a national policy for all of Canada. We all need food in this

great country, all of Canada — some co-operation, you know, programs targeted to average-size producers instead of the big wealthy producers, targeted to those in need.

And we're talking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the revitalization of rural Saskatchewan. Something has to be done. We have to have co-operation between both levels of government to make some sense out of this . . . some of these bad policies we had in the past, and get ourselves going in the right direction.

And when we talk about the drought, we talk about the drought in the south-west, we definitely don't want a repeat of the last drought program that we went through. We're still paying now \$15 million a year to the feds for that program.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell you that in north-east Saskatchewan where I farm, some of our crops were just as bad as our neighbours' who were in a different township just across the road. And some of those neighbours were receiving 14 and \$15 per acre for the same type of crop that I grew and my neighbours grew. And what we received was 36 cents per acre for our canola crop. And there's no doubt in my mind, the administration probably cost five times that amount.

So all I'm saying is when we get some kind of a drought package in place for the south-west, let's not have a repeat performance of the last one. Let's have a fair performance and let's not have to pay for it for the next five, six years like what happened last time.

And I would ask all members of this Assembly to co-operate on this resolution and to get the federal minister to come out and have a look at the situation, just see how bad it is out there in south-western Saskatchewan.

Our provincial minister was out there with some of our ag caucus members and some of the reports are quite horrible. Indeed when they talk about 20 per cent to the crop, in some areas has germinated only 20 per cent and some of that has burnt off already. The pastures are dry. Some of the pastures are burnt.

And you know the Grasslands Park has potential for a lot of grazing in there, so again we're asking for the co-operation of everyone in this Assembly to agree on this motion and get the federal minister to come out and have a look and see how bad the situation really is.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand in my place to speak to the House today regarding the motion brought forward by the Minister of Agriculture.

And certainly as a number of members have already indicated in this Assembly and my colleague from Maple Creek has indicated as well, when it comes to drought in rural Saskatchewan it has a disastrous effect on each and

everyone of us. It affects everyone of us in this province.

I believe it was just recently there was an article in one of the local papers indicating the support that agriculture plays in the economic activity of this province. And the fact that I believe it's some 45 per cent of the jobs, directly or indirectly, in this province are affected by agriculture.

So when farmers are facing a difficult time, when agriculture is facing a difficult time, it plays on each and everyone of us in this province to really come to grips with the situation that is being faced by agricultural producers.

As we've heard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the problem has certainly been magnified this spring in the south-western part of this province.

As the member from Saltcoats indicated, his area has been inundated with moisture and rain.

I come from an area too where seeding has really dragged out in the last three weeks due to rain. But I don't hear anyone . . . if they do complain for a minute, Mr. Speaker, they all of a sudden remember the reports of the south-west and they say, well I guess we'd just as soon have the moisture and have the green conditions and have the less growth that we're seeing, not only in the fact that we can put our cattle out, our livestock out to pasture.

And as conditions stand right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, certain we're probably in the position of maybe pasturing one and a half times per head on the same acres if the conditions would remain the same compared to a normal growing season. Which is certainly something to be thankful for in light of the fact that producers in the south-western part of Saskatchewan are facing the difficult challenge of wondering what to do with their livestock herds.

And as we've heard recently . . . and some of the auctions across this province, and indeed in the south-west . . . I believe Maple Creek has already indicated they are starting to see breeding stock being sold off because the cattlemen in those areas just do not have sufficient pasture to maintain their herd. And for those of us in the livestock industry, when you start digging into a breeding herd that you've worked at for a number of years, it takes a while to bring that breeding herd back up and especially when that's your main income.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about the problems that the drought creates in the agricultural sector and in our province. We're concerned about it because it also plays an important role in the economic activity of our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When I think about the drought situation . . . we all can think back to times when we have at certain times, at different times in the period of our years on the farm, faced periods where we have had abnormally high rainfall or abnormally low rainfall. And certainly the situation that we face in the south-west, contrary to the south-east, it's hard to believe that in a province only — what is it? — about 4 or 500 miles wide or is it 6, I'm not sure right now, that we can have such a contrast. But not

only is it the south-western part of the province of Saskatchewan facing a problem, I know that Alberta, the southern part of Alberta, is facing the same kind of problem.

And so it is imperative, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we indeed look at ways in which we can work towards stabilizing the agricultural sector of our economy.

Now the motion presented before us talks about approaching the federal government to live up to their responsibility, and no one will disagree with the fact that the federal government does have a responsibility, does have a major important role in supporting agriculture, supporting agricultural initiatives, not just in Saskatchewan but across this nation and across Canada. In fact, in participating in the negotiations right now at GATT, one of the major problems we face in agriculture is the fact that the imbalances in trade and subsidies across our world not only affect us here in Saskatchewan, but it affects agriculture production world-wide.

So agriculture producers are not just facing drought situations and not just facing areas in this province where they're facing the fact that it's too wet to put a crop in the ground, but we have that continual problem of the subsidy war that we're facing and the lack of support for the product, the lack of price that we as producers would need for the product we are producing.

But I would also suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that agricultural producers are facing another problem in this province, and it's the fact that the government of the day continually puts the onus on the federal government without realizing that they have a responsibility as well towards agriculture and towards the decisions they make that affect not only agriculture but education and health and so many other areas of our province. And it would be very easy for every one of us to always look at the other person and blame them for their lack of support and commitment.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that many of the producers in the south-west, if they had the opportunity and if they were able to sign up to the 1991 GRIP program as many have indicated, that the drought wouldn't be as disastrous to them as it is going to be in light of the 1992 GRIP program.

Now we realize that the decision on the GRIP program is something that is still being negotiated and still being discussed. And as we went through question period today and as it was brought forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact is the questions regarding the GRIP program and stabilization of the farm economy is based on all governments working together along with the farm community and the agricultural sector to design programs in which producers could become involved so that the onus is taken off the taxpayer.

Certainly the taxpayer is going to have a commitment to the agricultural sector and they're going to give a commitment to that agricultural sector. But I believe the taxpayer wants to realize, as everyone else, that their dollars are spent wisely and efficiently.

And when you look at the GRIP program — the 1991 GRIP program — and in light of the drought issue we're facing here, the 1991 GRIP program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly would give a guarantee to the grain producers in the south-western part of the province that they had a minimum dollar they could work with, that the costs of putting their crop in the ground . . . even though the land was dry and even though right now the fertilizer and the chemicals that they're applying and the many times I'm sure they're sitting there wondering today whether they should even be going out and applying the chemicals to try and protect the crop from the weeds when the crop is drying up right in front of them. And no doubt many producers will think twice before they apply the chemicals.

But the GRIP program as we had in 1991 had a lot of flaws, and we all agree with that, and the federal government agreed with that and appointed a panel. And indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, next spring I understand the federal government will be taking recommendations from their panel and their committee to address some of the flaws and be revisiting the GRIP program again next year.

So what's happening to Saskatchewan producers is the fact that not only were there annoyances about the 1991 GRIP program, but they're also facing the fact that now they have to make another decision with a major change regarding '92 program and then next year there'll be some more changes regarding GRIP and stabilization programs in the grain sector.

So I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that for the government to put all the onus on the federal government — certainly provincial governments have a responsibility within their jurisdiction as well. They have a responsibility to support the people that have elected them to govern.

And across my area of the province, there are people that are quite satisfied with the '92 program, Mr. Speaker. But there are many people as well who would prefer to have the 1991 program. So in light of the questions that are raised out there, in light of the problems that farmers are facing, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it is very reasonable for us to ask the government to give producers the choice and find out.

If indeed the '92 GRIP program is the answer, then allow producers to choose. The producers will let them know whether or not they're happy or satisfied with the '92 program by the way they take up and become involved and accept the program.

If a number of producers go back and take the '91 program which we may even see in the next little while, Mr. Speaker . . . the courts may give producers that option of going back to the '91 program although I suspect the government will be introducing legislation that will force producers to accept a program they don't like and deem that the information that was supposed to have been available to them by March 15 was indeed there when in fact we know it wasn't.

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion that is taking the top hand of the law instead of sitting down and consulting and

working together with people to iron out the problems that they are facing. And of course in light of the changes, it creates a major problem to western producers in the south-west and the grain sector.

But as well, Mr. Speaker, what about the cattle industry? We are all aware as well of the problems that can be created when pastures went dry and when dugouts went dry, when water supplies run dry. And I believe the member from Shaunavon talked about approaching the federal government and allowing producers to run livestock in the — what was it? — there was some heritage, wildlife land available in the south-west there. And, Mr. Speaker, that's an area of concern that I've had for a number of years.

(1545)

In our area I've had, since I've been elected to this House, producers on numerous occasions have approached me about the fact that they've been in a drought situation or their pastures have been bare. We have wildlife land right adjacent to them. And, Mr. Speaker, the Wildlife Federation has suggested that that land should not be grazed and not be pastured. The Department of Natural Resources has tended to agree and accept the recommendations of the Wildlife Federation. You can have grass that's knee to waist high on one side of the fence, and yet you're forced to feed your cattle because you're lacking pasture.

I would suggest that the government members take the time to talk to wildlife members as I've done in my area, and encourage their wildlife members who are farmers themselves to approach the Wildlife Federation and allow people to graze some of this wildlife land; allow it open. And if they don't want to allow for grazing on that wildlife land or if they . . . I guess the fear they have many times, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that it would be over-grazed.

Well there are many wildlife federations around this province and we can give them, rather than putting the onus on the Department of Natural Resources, the job of policing it. Let the wildlife members police this wildlife land that they have taken control of through the wildlife development fund. Let them decide how many cattle they would allow to pasture in this land that is sitting vacant and idle, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are certainly ways in which we can address some of the needs that are being faced, the immediate needs of farmers in the south-west.

But, Mr. Speaker, as we've heard indicated today, the problem is not just the immediate needs; the problem is coming up with a long-term solution that gives the farmers a choice. And I would suggest that when farmers have a choice to choose insurance and they don't take insurance, then it . . . they have given away their access to funds that are available to them to protect themselves. And to come running to governments, Mr. Speaker, demanding money from governments and from the taxpayer when they said no to an insurance plan, in my opinion isn't right, isn't fair. No farmer should accept the fact that the taxpayer should be there to just bail them out

because they didn't try to protect themselves.

So it's imperative as governments that we work together with producers, with the federal government, with provincial governments, to design programs that can work, that can give farmers a feeling of stability, and that will give farmers the opportunity of protecting themselves and their farm economies.

Mr. Speaker, some of the other problems that are being created is not just the drought problem that we're facing, not just the drought in the south-west, but the fact that the provincial government unilaterally eliminated the FeedGAP program — a program that was designed, Mr. Speaker, to put producers in this province on a level playing-field with feedlot operators in other parts of Canada, namely Alberta to the west of us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just got off the phone this morning, talking to an individual who on a rainy day last week decided to get some of his books brought up to date, and all of a sudden realized what the elimination of the FeedGAP program was going to mean to his farming operation. And, Mr. Speaker, as he indicated to me, the elimination of the FeedGAP program is going to take away possibly the only positive side he had on his ledger regarding income on his feeding program, Mr. Speaker, feeding his hogs and feeding his calves out.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we have before us is the fact that on one hand the government is condemning the federal government for the lack of support and asking this opposition to support them in their support of drought in the province and for producers facing drought in the province of Saskatchewan, and on the other hand they continually tell producers that, well we're sorry, we've eliminated the FeedGAP program and we're not going to introduce it, we're not going to support the feedlot industry in this province, we're not going to support the hog producers in this province.

And the result, Mr. Speaker, is going to be the fact that jobs, many thousands of jobs in this province will be affected — jobs in the processing industry, Mr. Speaker, jobs in . . . possibly jobs in Moose Jaw or jobs in Saskatoon, because the plants will not have the product available to run at the capacity that they were geared to operate under.

What about the cap on the fuel tax rebate program, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, many producers and farmers as a whole are great consumers of fuel and energy in this province, and by giving them the . . . rebating the tax on fuel used for the production of crops within our province, Mr. Speaker, was another way of helping farmers put a product on the market and giving it to consumers at a price much below the ability of producers to produce it with.

Mr. Speaker, I guess one of the arguments that we will continue to face in this country and around the world in trying to argue for higher prices is what the consumer is willing and able to pay for food. And for far too long we have taken for granted the fact that we pay a very low percentage of our income — take-home dollar — on food compared to many other nations in the world.

And in some ways many producers would argue out there that it would be fairer to pay a fair price at the market point and charge the consumer rather than designing safety net or stabilization programs so that farmers could continue to operate and at least have a decent standard of living and continue to produce the food needed to feed a hungry, hungry world.

Mr. Speaker, it also bothers me when we as producers in Saskatchewan can be efficient and effective producers and we can have abundances of product to market, and I hear of the fact that recently a number of ships that were coming into port to take grain back to Russia were being turned away because the Russians couldn't pay for the shipping charges. However, I believe recently or just the other day, Mr. Speaker, they are now being allowed to come in and again load and take grain, much-needed grain, to the Russian nations to help feed hungry people in Russia at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what bothers me about the movement of grain and turning away ships from moving grain out of our world into areas of the world where people are hungry is a fact that if we're going to give farmers a value for their product, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to pay them and pay them up front, why are we not willing, Mr. Speaker, to share some of our abundance with those who are less fortunate than we are?

So, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that we can be talking about abundance when there is an area of the province that is certainly suffering from drought and facing the fact . . . the probability of maybe empty bins next fall. But this province has a unique ability to have a very productive sector of our province producing grain and the bins being overflowing, and another corner of the province can be very dry and people without.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are in agreement that yes, the drought situation in the south-west is something that we have to look at, something we deal with. And I guess I would have to also suggest that it was in light of the fact that the government has been talking of a consultative process for so many weeks, indeed months, Mr. Speaker, it was at least pleasing to hear that the Minister of Rural Development and the Minister of Agriculture did take some time to go down and visit with people in the south-west regarding the drought situation and listen to the needs of producers out in the south-western part of the province.

But not only should they be listening to producers in the south-west who are facing the problems of drought, what about talking to producers — hog producers and feedlot operators and farmers in general right across the province who are facing the difficulties that have been placed on their doorstep by a government who didn't take the time to consult?

Mr. Speaker, we can go along and accept the fact that we need to provide support for people in the drought-stricken areas of Saskatchewan. But we must all work together on this. We shouldn't just blame someone else. And again I reiterate, Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the fact that the provincial government is shirking their

responsibility by continually blaming the federal government.

On one hand they want the federal government to support them on a project like maybe talking to them about AECL (Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.), and then they go and condemn the federal government for not pouring money into this province when they turn down money that would have been available to them if they would have continued on with the 1991 GRIP program — some, I believe, \$200 million that would have been coming in. They complain about federal off-loading when they turn around in the next breath and say no, we don't need that federal money.

So, Mr. Speaker, yes, even though there's a lot of work that has to be done, even though programs that have been designed to date may have some flaws, Mr. Speaker, I believe by working together, by consulting with people, consulting with people in the industry, we can work out ways of helping producers and giving them a form of stability that would make the family farm again a productive place to live, to grow, and to raise a family.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to be able to speak on this motion. And I'd just like to read it and then speak to it a little bit:

That the Assembly recognizes the devastating drought conditions facing livestock and grain producers in south-western Saskatchewan, and request the federal Minister of Agriculture to visit the area and to take steps to provide financial assistance to alleviate these disastrous circumstances.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it very, very interesting what the motion puts forward. It seems to me in this province today we have an Agriculture minister, that his whole agricultural policy, that the entire policy of this government is to point their finger east to Ottawa. No help whatsoever for agriculture, in fact hit after hit after hit against agriculture. And the only solution they have to every problem farmers in this province have today and ranchers have in this province today is point their finger east; say the federal government is responsible and should be looking after the people of this province.

Well I say to the Minister of Agriculture, big fat help he's been lately, big fat help. Ever since he was elected and appointed the Minister of Agriculture he's done nothing for agriculture. Not a single thing has been put forward in a plan that's directed to help agriculture. We see hit after hit after hit against agriculture.

We'll start with the GRIP program. Well, Mr. Speaker, when I talk to the farmers out in the south-west part of Saskatchewan that I represent, they see this program, the '92 program as an example of the type of respect and help that they're going to get from this government.

In fact farmers all over this province are rallying in rallies about the GRIP program, the '92 program. They've taken them to court on this, Mr. Speaker. They lost in the courts.

They lost again today. They failed to meet deadlines for their statements of defence. Every opportunity they have to present their case, they've failed to meet their case.

Mr. Speaker, in the judge's decision, the judge identified the hit on farmers as \$27.20 an acre. That was the hit — \$27.20 an acre; 31 million crop acres in this province. A hit of just under a billion dollars, just under a billion dollars is what they've taken from this government on one program alone.

And the member from Shaunavon over there, he's motioning that this is all fine and dandy. This is all fine and dandy. Twelve hundred farmers came to a rally in Shaunavon and he should realize what they think, what they think of the program that you people put forward. He can laugh and joke all he wants about what's going on here today, but the fact is that member will never be back in this House after this term of office. He'll never make it back here because the farmers in that area have recognized what kind of support he's willing to put forward on their behalf. That's the kind of support he's willing to put forward for them — a big fat no. That's what he goes down there and says. No, I can't help you guys. No, we can't help you with the GRIP program. No, we can't help you with the livestock cash advance. No, we can't help you with FeedGAP.

Twelve hundred farmers should've been able to get through to that member, but no, no, Mr. Speaker. They couldn't get through to him because the people, the powers that be in this NDP administration said to him, you go down there and you be quiet. And you don't tell them anything except what we in Regina tell you to tell them, Mr. Speaker.

That's what happened down there in Shaunavon earlier this spring; 1,200 farmers wanted to speak to that member about the problems that they were faced with — the problems incidentally that were identified very, very early in this program, the 1992 program, the effect that drought could have on this program.

(1600)

And now, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing the chickens come home to roost. The drought is on in the south-west part of this province right today. The drought is on, and the farmers down there are realizing the shortcomings in this program. Right from the start they realized the shortcomings. And now, now, Mr. Speaker, finally the Minister of Agriculture is starting to realize. He takes a trip down to see the folks down there in the south-west of the province, never realizing that there could be a drought in the south-west of the province.

For eight years, Mr. Speaker, there's been a drought going on down in the south-west corner of this province, and these people didn't have any idea that it was even happening until yesterday when he took a trip down there to see what's going on. Big fat help that he's been down there. Going to go down and tour the area. That's a big help.

And the member from Kelvington-Wadena — an obvious expert on drought — he gets up and speaks, Mr. Speaker,

about the problems in his area, obviously affected drought almost every year. Lot he knows about drought. There's farmers down in the south-west part of this province that face drought on a continual basis. Eight years now some of them have faced drought. They know about drought, and they know the shortcomings of this program, Mr. Speaker. That's the type of thing that's happening with them down in the area down there.

The livestock industry's been devastated. The livestock industry's been devastated by this government, Mr. Speaker. The livestock cash advance has been cancelled. The FeedGAP program's been cancelled, Mr. Speaker.

They talk about they're going to help farmers. They campaigned and campaigned and campaigned last fall about how they were going to do better; how they were going to help the farmers; how they were going to get them more money; how they were going to squeeze more dollars out of Ottawa for them. Well they haven't squeezed one penny, not one penny from Ottawa for farmers. Not one cent.

In the past number of years there's been \$13 billion put into this province in the form of agriculture help between the provincial government and the federal government. And so far not 1 cent — not 1 cent they've got from the federal government. Not 1 cent did they get from the federal government or anybody else, for that matter.

And the member from Kelvington-Wadena, he's a farmer and he should know that. He's had cheque after cheque after cheque, and so has the member from Shaunavon. Cheque after cheque after cheque from a government source of one kind or another, and yet he doesn't recognize that he's got any help.

The farmers in the south-west of this province though, they realize they got help from these governments — the past administration and the federal government. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, they're upset with these guys.

That's why 1,200 farmers showed up at a meeting in Shaunavon to voice their concerns. But what did they get? What did they get from this government? Did they get any help? No. A couple of . . . about a month or two later they come out with the most devastating budget for agriculture that's ever been witnessed in this province. Never before have we seen the kind of havoc wreaked on one industry in the short period of time that this administration's been in power. Never before.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, now we see them introducing things like marked fuel. Marked fuel. We're going back to the 1950s. We're going to be driving around on ripped-up highways — ripped-up highways, gravel roads — with marked fuel in the tank. That's the kind of thing that these people talk about help for agriculture.

It's a shame that these people don't know something about agriculture. They don't know the first thing about agriculture when it comes to trying to diversify the economy of agriculture.

One of the first steps they made was to cancel the FeedGAP program, cancel the livestock cash advance.

Big help for diversifying agriculture. Big help. They should be ashamed of themselves. We're going to be driving on gravel roads. Can anyone in this province imagine that? Can anyone imagine that? Gravel roads.

It'll be interesting to see how this is put together, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I can envision how this is going to be done. They're going to go down into the south-west of the province where the guys are facing the worst drought they've ever faced in probably the history of the province, at least going back to the '30s at the very least. They're going to go in there with huge rototillers and rip up the road, rip up the pavement. And then they're going to . . . probably in all cases the beds over the years become a little bit deteriorated so they'll have to build up the road, and then they're going to gravel it. At a cost — as my colleague from Maple Creek who knows something about the costs of maintaining and gravelling roads in this province because he's a reeve in this province — at a cost of about \$25,000 a kilometre. That's what it costs to build up and gravel a road in this province today — \$25,000 a kilometre. And that's what they're going to do. They're going to come in and rip up the road and then gravel it

An Hon. Member: — Who's the Minister of Highways?

Mr. Boyd: — And yes, incidentally, who is the Minister of Highways? The same guy, the same guy who is telling the farmers that they have to get by with a little bit less. A little less, a little less — a billion bucks alone in the GRIP program, a billion dollars alone that he put at risk for the farmers of Saskatchewan.

And the member again from Shaunavon wants to speak up again about the help he's putting forward for farmers. I say to him, and I say again, Mr. Speaker, 1,200 farmers should have been able to get through to him, but they couldn't. They couldn't get through to him. He didn't have the guts to stand up in his caucus and tell them what's wrong with this program. He didn't have the intestinal fortitude to do that, Mr. Speaker. That's what's wrong with the member from Shaunavon.

As a result of the actions taken by this government, particularly with respect to the livestock and grain industry, we will see things like the packing plants put at jeopardy in this province, Mr. Speaker, the packing plant in Moose Jaw, the packing plant in Saskatoon. Those will be put in jeopardy because of the short-sightedness of this government, a government that is uncaring about what's happening in agriculture.

They talk about the farmers . . . it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, the only way the farmers of this province can get the attention of this government is to drag them kicking and screaming into court. That's the only way they can get the attention of this government, try and drag them into court. Well they did, Mr. Speaker, they dragged them into court. They challenged them in court. They were successful in court. And yet we've seen evidence today presented . . . in fact no evidence today presented, in a statement of defence. They have no defence, Mr. Speaker. They have no defence for their actions so far, absolutely no defence for what they have done.

They've been kicked out of court, unceremoniously

escorted out of the court in Regina here today, because they had no defence. They were deemed, they were deemed . . . they say that they're going to bring in legislation to take care of the problem. They're going to deem that the farmers of this province received notice. Well I'm a farmer in this province, Mr. Speaker, and I didn't receive notice.

On March 15 I didn't get a registered letter in the mail suggesting that they were going to make changes. The member from Kelvington-Wadena didn't get a letter. The member from Shaunavon didn't get a letter. The member from Rosthern didn't get a letter. The member from Morse didn't get a letter. I'm not surprised that them two didn't get a letter either, Mr. Speaker, as they don't farm.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers of this province didn't get a letter. The fact is they didn't get a letter. And now they're going to bring in legislation that says we did get one. Legitimize the kinds of things that they want to do in agriculture. Well I say to them, Mr. Speaker, no sir, no sir. The people of this province won't put up with that kind of thing.

They continually and continually harp at the federal government about coming forward with a third line of defence. Well, Mr. Speaker, as I recall the third line of defence, there was a number of things put forward in the third line of defence. First of all, it was the reduction in the revenue insurance premiums of farmers of 25 per cent. That was the first step in it.

The second step in it was a two-stage acreage payment — FSAM1 and FSAM2, farm support adjustment measures, for the members that don't know what that means. Farm support adjustment measures; that's what it was.

The first program came out in the late fall and the second program came out in the spring. An acreage payment in both circumstances that were specifically designed to help out the livestock and grain producers in this province, and specifically designed not only for all of the producers but particularly producers in the south-west that are faced with drought.

Mr. Speaker, not only was there things with respect to FSAM1 and FSAM2 for the third line of defence, there was adjustments in the NISA triggering mechanism that allowed farmers to put money into the program and immediately access that money. That was another component of the third line of defence.

What did they do though? What has this government done? They have done absolutely nothing for agriculture. They have cut back in every respect — cut the CAFF program, counselling and assistance for farmers. They cut out the rural natural gas distribution system — lots of areas in this province.

And I'd venture to say that cattle producers and grain producers in the south-west of this province are clear examples of people that aren't going to be getting access to the Saskatchewan natural gas. They've increased costs, Mr. Speaker, at every turn and cut back on programs at every other turn. They've increased the costs of farmers in this province for the utility rates — SaskPower,

SaskEnergy. They've jacked up the prices of insurance premiums for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance).

Mr. Speaker, this type of action in this province today is the kind of thing that is making the farmers of this province extremely upset with this government. They're to the point where they're ready to give up and move out of this province, ready to give up and move out of this province because of the short-sightedness of this government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of my remarks now I would like to move an amendment to this motion. And the amendment is the following:

All of the words after the word "Saskatchewan" be deleted and the following be substituted therefor:

and request the federal government and provincial ministers of Agriculture to visit the area to take steps in concert with their shared responsibility for agriculture to provide financial assistance and protection to alleviate these disastrous circumstances, including (a) as a priority, the restoration of full drought protection offered under the 1991 GRIP program; (b) a cessation of all legal actions against farmers trying to recover their right to drought protection; and (c) withdrawal of any legislation at the federal and provincial levels that would remove or reduce drought protection for farmers in this area.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to make a few brief comments in support of the amendment as proposed by the member from Kindersley. I think, Mr. Speaker, that when we view the actions of the Minister of Agriculture, particularly in the last little while, it gives one wonder at the minister appearing briefly in the House today and proposing this particular emergency motion.

In the light of everything that has happened in this province in the last couple of months, it really makes people out there, particularly in rural Saskatchewan . . . and you have to feel for the folks in the south-west who once again have Mother Nature conspiring against their ability to support themselves, their families, and their communities.

When you have a natural catastrophe such as drought happening to these people, and then on top of that, add what this Minister of Agriculture has perpetrated on these people in the meantime, one can only feel for the folks down there.

When you look, I guess, at the latest numbers of out-migration for Saskatchewan — and this was an area that the members of the former opposition constantly harped upon. I can remember many of them standing up time after time in condemnation — and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there's been over 2,300 people leave this

province in a short few months of 1992. If you annualize that over a whole year, you're going to look at nearly 6,000 folks. A lot of those are going to be people in rural Saskatchewan who are simply giving up in despair.

(1615)

I've got a good friend of mine, Mr. Speaker, city of Moose Jaw, involved in a business that was almost totally dependent on agriculture — he's moving to Red Deer simply saying, I don't see any future here because of the actions of the government present.

A minister who has on many occasions told farmers one thing and gone and done another. And this latest action in the Court of Queen's Bench today only drives home the point that this minister doesn't understand his job, he doesn't understand what he's doing. He does not consult. He simply has a bull-headed view of the world — it's my way or the doorway.

And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, when we have jurisdictions nearby that allow people some opportunity, some future, I'm afraid they're going to take those opportunities and they're going to leave our province. And when you think of people that have had three and four generations of blood and sweat poured into a particular farming operation or a business that is dependent on agriculture, to lose people like that, Mr. Speaker, is a crime.

Members of the government stand in their place on an emergency debate which is supposedly asking the opposition co-operation in allowing farmers in the south-west of the province to access some grazing, to access some opportunities to maintain their livelihood, particularly in the livestock industry. And at the same time, those same members stand in their place and criticize every program that the former government provided.

One has to wonder, Mr. Speaker, as we study the present court action going on over GRIP, if this wasn't simply a spiteful action by the members of the new government because it was simply a program brought in by the former government, not because it was going to help out people in a drought-stricken area, which obviously '91 GRIP would.

There isn't a producer in that drought area of the province that wouldn't benefit from the '91 program — not one single one, no matter what his politics are, that wouldn't benefit, wouldn't be able to maintain his farming operation in a better state than what he's got right now.

And one really has to wonder at some of the motivation that is behind these people and the moves that they are making in regards to agriculture.

I heard members stand here today and say, well they were the great defenders of the cash advance system. Well it was the former government that brought in cash advances for the livestock sector. I mean when you look at the whole southern part of this province below No. 1 Highway, livestock is absolutely crucial — absolutely crucial to the survival of our communities. That cash

advance, no-interest cash advance, was a goodly part of the reason that people were able to maintain themselves in the face of some very, very difficult international commodity situations and some horrendous effects of Mother Nature over the last half dozen years.

Now if it's good enough for the grains industry, why isn't it good enough for the red meat industry? That question just begs to be answered every time one of these people gets on their feet. If it's good enough for one, if you're saying that we went to the wall, we went to the wall against the federal government on cash advances, what would be wrong with going to the wall for people in the red meat industry?

Well I'll tell you, the only thing I can find, Mr. Speaker, that's wrong with it is that most of the people in the red meat industry areas didn't vote for the New Democratic Party on a regular basis. That seems to be the only thing that I can find that says, if I'm going to support agriculture, if I'm going to go to the wall on cash advances for grain, that I'd feel the same way about the red meat industry. But it's not the case.

They say no, we simply can't do that. We would rather allow the red meat industry to vacate this province. We would rather allow \$200 million in economic impact leave this province. We would rather allow meat packing plants in Moose Jaw and Saskatoon to shut down and put their people out on the street. That's what we would rather allow.

And instead of maintaining a system that helped our producers compete with Alberta and with United States and with other jurisdictions in the FeedGAP, they use the same reasoning, Mr. Speaker — we would rather allow people to pack up and leave this province; we would rather allow people in the red meat industry at all sectors to simply leave.

And this, Mr. Speaker, really flies in the face of the shallow attempt by the Minister of Agriculture to come into this Assembly today on a rule 42 and say, boys, it's time we co-operated.

Well as the member from Kindersley so aptly pointed out to the Assembly a short time ago, there was a time when co-operation delivered tens of millions of dollars into this province for rural Saskatchewan. There was a time when that co-operation was very evident, and it was always, always roundly criticized on the floor of this Assembly, on the streets of Saskatchewan. At the farm kitchen table it was roundly criticized as not being enough. It simply wasn't enough that the provincial government was abrogating its responsibilities to rural Saskatchewan. And there had to be more.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as the opposition has pointed out time and time again, whether it's on motions for return, whether it's on health care, every sector of our society a short seven months ago had their votes solicited, had their votes bought by the New Democratic Party, that there would be more; that they would do things better.

Mr. Speaker, there's a word for that in our society, and it's called fraud. And what you are seeing today, Mr. Speaker,

what you are seeing today is a continuation of that fraud because those promises were totally hollow — totally hollow. There was no substance to them. In fact the evidence, Mr. Speaker, mounts daily, the evidence mounts daily that in fact what people are seeing is exactly the opposite.

Mr. Speaker, that is why today we are saying to the minister yes, we believe in co-operation. Yes, we believe that you and your federal counterpart should go down there and sit in the kitchens of south-west Saskatchewan, that you should be prepared to put your shoulder to the wheel, and at the same time you should not be prepared to come into this legislature and use your massive majority — use your massive majority — to try and break the law: the contract signed by 50,000 producers, a good many of them who today face massive drought in part of our province.

You can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. You can't deem that you did things you didn't do, and then say I'm going to go down there and I'm going to be the be-all and end-all to a bunch of people that are hurting. It just doesn't work that way.

The Minister of Agriculture could stand in this Assembly and say, well I guess because of exceptional circumstances I'm going to draw a line somewhere across Saskatchewan and I'm going to have the rules of '91 GRIP apply in that particular area because I know that it means at least \$30 an acre more. And that would mean more to those producers than anything else that minister could do.

If he is so utterly confident in what he has proposed, then give the producers on that side of the line a choice: '91 or '92 GRIP. Give them the opportunity to express themselves. He doesn't have to get into any *ad hoc* program at all.

And in my view, Mr. Speaker, the producers down there will make the right decision for their particular operation and they will make their choice accordingly. And the minister doesn't have to get into any *ad hoc*-ery whatsoever. He simply has to say, you people have a choice and when you make that choice, your government is going to stand behind you.

He isn't going to come into the legislature of Saskatchewan and coerce the members of this Assembly into helping him break the law. He doesn't have to do that. He simply has to give those people a choice. And they will make it appropriately.

And I think each and every one of them as taxpayers in this province as they make that choice will think of the bigger picture, the bigger picture that is our province. I don't think any one of those farmers down there who is seeing his crop burn up and his cows moved off to greener pastures is going to make a choice that is going to harm the rest of the people of this province. He will do it in honesty and he will do it with integrity, as his forebearers did when they came and settled this land.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think the amendment as proposed by my colleague from Kindersley is immanently reasonable.

It talks to the co-operation as proposed by the minister. I think farmers in south-western Saskatchewan would enjoy seeing the member from Rosetown and the federal member from Kindersley going hand in hand through the drought area assessing the various options.

And I think it would be very proper that the national minister with Parks tag along with them. I've been in the Grasslands Park a few short months ago and I agree with the member from Shaunavon — there's knee-high grass in there and I don't think there's enough antelope and deer to eat it all. And it would be right and proper that the two levels of government in this province co-operate in seeing that grass put to a better use.

Our amendment speaks to that. And it also speaks to the fundamental issue of whether this legislature should be using its members in a way that the courts of Saskatchewan have said is unreasonable; that this minister should not be bringing in legislation at this time to override the wishes of Saskatchewan's farming public.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I support the amendment of the member from Kindersley.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the amendment and to make a few comments with respect to the proposal that was put forward by the Minister of Agriculture.

I want to set the record straight, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the willingness of NDP administrations to help farmers. The NDP minister stands here today and he said several times, saying, well because there's a debt in the province of Saskatchewan, we just can't help the farmers. And we've heard that over and over again.

And we know, Mr. Speaker — we're going to get into it in terms of estimates — that they ballooned the debt up. And it's kind of backfired on them because their credit rating is falling through the floor. And the Premier and the Minister of Finance are both in New York telling them a different story, that it's really okay in Saskatchewan. But this kind of got away on them. They ballooned it. They used the accrual method of accounting, brought forward some debt. And then they can say, well we can't do anything because of debt.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make this point. The point is when the NDP said they had money in the '70s and the '80s, did they act any differently than they act today? Not at all.

And for the new members in the legislature, I want you to listen to this and remind yourself of why the NDP lost so miserably in 1982 and lost most of the rural ridings in 1986 and would not win a rural riding today if there was an election called in the province of Saskatchewan. Not a one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — Not just the Minister of Agriculture wouldn't be here, but all the rest of those rural members wouldn't be, Mr. Speaker, And they know that's the case,

because what I'm about to say is absolutely historical and is a fact.

Now when the NDP were walking around the province of Saskatchewan in the '70s and early '80s saying, oh we've got money in Saskatchewan, there's a Heritage Fund, and we've nationalized the potash and we've taken over land bank and there's money, people came to them and said, what about people? What about the farmers? What about pensioners? What about rural communities?

Interest rates were running at 21 or 22 per cent, Mr. Speaker, and you were in the legislature at that time. And what did the NDP do to help farmers during a financial crisis, when money doubles in four years under 20-some per cent interest rates? What did the NDP do to help? Not a red cent. Nothing. Not a thing.

(1630)

And they stood up and said, oh but it's the federal government. It's the federal government. It's those feds. It's all their turn. And yet at the same time, they were bragging about all the money they had. And people said, well where's their heart and soul?

The member from Riversdale, who was deputy premier at the time, stood up and said, well we can't help. I guess the farmers are just going to have to do their best. Well do you know what happened, Mr. Speaker? Farmers, they didn't forget that comment, and in the coming election of 1982 the member from Riversdale lost his own riding and they lost ridings all across Saskatchewan. I think they only held one rural riding, and maybe there was seven or eight left, because they didn't stick up for people.

They didn't provide them with rural gas. They didn't provide them with pension legislation. They didn't provide them with drought protection. They didn't help them to build at all. And yet they bragged about the money they have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what do we see? The same line coming out of these people saying oh well, there's not the money we'd like; therefore we can't help you.

Well I want to remind you, Mr. Speaker, and you know full well, whether they have money or whether they don't have money, these people don't care about the people. The NDP don't care about farmers. They don't care about rural people. They don't care about pensioners. They don't care about women. They don't care about the aboriginal people. They just care about themselves. Anything to get elected — that's the motto.

And if you took that campaign out that we now see before the people, the one that was thrown out of court this morning . . . Imagine, saying that you're illegal. You can't even show up in court on time. You didn't allow farmers to know on time. You don't show up on time. You don't tell them the truth on time. Hopefully they'll vote for you just in time to get you elected. And then when you're elected, what are you going to say? Whoops, I don't have any heart and I don't have any money to help the people.

Well this morning the judge said it all. The judgement of

the judge this morning is the same as the judgement of the people of the province of Saskatchewan: you're out of here. You don't count. You don't listen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — You don't respond. You have no conscience.

And the hypocrisy of people running around saying, well this is the way Tommy Douglas would do it. Imagine, Tommy Douglas would be like this. There's a drought in southern Saskatchewan, you've got people leaving the province, you've got farmers going broke, and the Minister of Agriculture stands in here and says, well we'll have to call on the federal government, just like the member from Riversdale did. He says, well it must be the feds.

You know, every other province across the country co-operates in crop insurance and GRIP. Why not Saskatchewan? What is so absolutely unique about the NDP in Saskatchewan? Well it's just that they're NDP.

It's the same thing that we heard in the 1970s and the 1980s. And people said, you know what? — now I remember why the NDP lost.

Mr. Speaker, I was in the Minister of Agriculture's riding in the community of Rosetown on Friday, and I met with a couple of hundred people that are from his constituency. And, Mr. Speaker, he has got about as much chance of getting re-elected in this province in the rest of his life as . . .

An Hon. Member: — Ice cream parlours in purgatory.

Mr. Devine: — Ice cream parlours in purgatory. Mr. Speaker, they are so ashamed of their member of the legislature not telling the truth. And on top of that, then going right in the face of the things that he said he was going to do, he pulls the rug right out from under them.

And it's not just because of roads, which is bad enough. And the people there are saying, well here's the new sign in rural Saskatchewan: this new gravel road is brought to you thanks to the NDP.

An Hon. Member: — Ripped up by the NDP.

Mr. Devine: — Ripped up by the NDP. Like, you know, you only have highway signs: this new highway is brought to you by the people of Saskatchewan. Well they're going to have a new sign out in the Rosetown constituency: this road is brought to you by the new Minister of Agriculture; the NDP member brings you this new gravel road.

Mr. Speaker, they look at GRIP and they can't believe that a minister would not tell them the truth at election time that he would break that contract. And they look at the Saskatchewan Pension Plan for rural people and 44,000 women and said, why won't he tell the truth? Why didn't he tell us that he was going to take it away?

And they look at all of these people that depended on

natural gas, and they look at all the people who campaigned and have voted for tax cuts — not increases, cuts. And they voted . . . Remember all of the campaign stuff saying, we'll get you the cost of production; we'll get more money from Ottawa; we'll reduce your taxes; we'll give you more in rural areas. And they added this all up.

And, Mr. Speaker, if you were there on Friday night at the barbecue in Mr. Minister of Agriculture's riding in Rosetown, you would have been absolutely . . . well it would have shocked even you, Mr. Speaker. With all your political experience, you would have said, my goodness, he's been invited to go to places that . . . they didn't even want to talk to him, but now they do because people are losing their highways.

Mr. Speaker, what they remember about the NDP is simply this. When they had money they didn't do anything. They campaigned that they promised they would do absolutely everything and now that they're back in again on all these fake, hollow promises, it's even worse. And what's more is everybody out there knows that if they'd have told the truth, they wouldn't have got elected. And if they now go to the people in rural Saskatchewan, they won't win a single, solitary riding. Not a single, solitary riding. And anybody feels real brave, they can just throw their hat in the ring right now anywhere in rural Saskatchewan.

And in urban Saskatchewan they're looking at tax increases, they're looking at cancellation of AECL, they're looking at job cuts, they are looking at the public service — 4 or 500 people. And we're just beginning to get into it in estimates.

Mr. Speaker, I just make the point to these members opposite and particularly the new members that were elected: the same lines, the same verbiage come out of the front benches of the NDP when they said they had money compared to even when they don't have money. They don't help.

Now they say, but we're doing this like Tommy did it. Tommy Douglas tried and Tommy Douglas helped bring rural electrification. We introduce natural gas and they cancel it. We introduce rural programs for jobs in rural communities; they cancel that. We help people build and diversify in rural Saskatchewan, and they cut them off and they stopped that kind of construction. And when they really need help, they design a program that will not deliver.

I'm going to take the members here back to the point that they said the new GRIP was designed by a special committee. Well we talked with the chairman of that committee, Mr. Speaker. And some of the members of the committee like Professor Hartley Furtan told the public and he's told members of the legislature and he's certainly told our caucus that if there is a drought, the NDP plan on GRIP is a disaster.

Now this is a professor of agriculture who is touted from time to time if it suits your purposes, the NDP purposes, he says if there's a drought, the 1991 NDP GRIP program . . . and only in Saskatchewan — and we just happen to have half the farm land in Canada — and only in

Saskatchewan if there's a drought it's a disaster.

And you're standing up in your places and saying, well that's just the way it's going to be because we really don't care about farmers, and we really don't care about rural people. And he says, well maybe you're going to have to open up parks, national parks.

I didn't hear the minister stand up and offer provincial parks. You've got provincial parks with grass growing right up to your knees. Has he offered to co-operate and say, we can do this; we can help here; we'll work with you like Manitoba works with the federal government, like Alberta does, or other provinces. No. Only in Saskatchewan you get this real hard-nosed partisanship where nobody is an ally.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm making the point because, Mr. Speaker, even the NDP's own members, Member of Parliament, are now starting to criticize the provincial NDP. Saskatchewan's NDP MPs (Member of Parliament) feel the heat from the provincial counterparts, says the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald* Mr. Rod Laporte . . . is feeling the heat because provincial NDP are making so many mistakes.

On the front page of the paper in Moose Jaw he's kicking the tar out of the provincial NDP, his local MLAs, the cabinet decisions, and all the silly things, unforgivable things that the provincial NDP are doing. And the federal MPs are going to an election within the next 12 months. And he's saying such things: I have no part of them, I don't talk to the NDP, and NDPs are not of NDP. They're not really like me. I'm a different kind of an NDP, he says. And he hopes to get re-elected on agricultural policy.

Well Mr. Rod Laporte, MP for Moose Jaw, is not happy with the agriculture policy, Mr. Speaker. He thinks the NDP provincial agriculture policy is a sham. It's pathetic. It doesn't help. It's broken promises. You get kicked out of court. You get kicked out of meetings. You're going to get kicked out of ridings. You have lost the respect of rural people. And you can sit there and say, well I guess we would get elected again, wouldn't you, if you just went and told them what you were going to do.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've just begun to get into estimates. And the kinds of sham that you're building and the kinds of evidence of the things that you're going on — and the more the caucus meets I'm sure they're realizing this — that the front bench, two or three people there, have snookered the whole caucus and half the NDP Party.

But they haven't snookered the public. They are not going to believe what you're doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — And they're not going to support it. They see other provinces co-operating. They see other provinces dealing with it.

Mr. Speaker, as we sit here in a crisis in agriculture that the NDP campaigned — the NDPs that were going to be open and were going to share — what do I see in the newspaper and just watch on television? More secret,

tight-lipped meetings between the NDP Premier and premiers down East. The very thing that he campaigned against — agriculture, constitutional, economic development. He's down there in so-called — and it looks like he's kind of proud of it, Mr. Speaker — secret meetings behind closed doors on constitution and economic things with eastern premiers, Quebec and Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter what they say during a campaign. They are not open. They hide information. They break their promises. They're no more open than . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, every single one of them, every single one of them knows exactly the point that I'm making with respect to the kinds of promises they made . . .

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

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I know the Leader of the Opposition is having a good time, but there is a point of relevancy here to the debate on the motion. I was wondering if you could remind the Leader of the Opposition that this motion really is one on devastating drought conditions facing the livestock and grain producers in south-western Saskatchewan and that what we're really after here is their co-operation, asking them to vote for the motion that would request the federal Minister of Agriculture to visit that area and take the steps provided to provide financial assistance to alleviate these disastrous circumstances. I wonder if the member would stick to the motion and forget about trying to re-run on the election.

The Speaker: — The debate this afternoon has been rather wide in its scope although I do want to . . . I was tempted several times to draw the member's attention that we are on a motion and an amendment, but he did draw it back to his . . . although in a very cursory manner. I ask the member to maybe more directly get to the amendment and the motion before it.

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, obviously, Mr. Speaker, I've struck a chord of some embarrassment of the members opposite.

But my point is simply this, that your agricultural policy is not only being doubted by the people and not only doubted by many members of your caucus who are now openly supporting the '92 GRIP and not only doubted by the NDP members of parliament that I've quoted, but it's now going right to the top where the flip-flops — not only in agriculture policy but other policies — are building this image about the NDP that you cannot be trusted. You're not believable.

If you say you're going to do something, you do the opposite. If you say you're going to cut taxes, you increase them. If you say you're going to help farmers, you put burden on them. There's a revenge, a rural revenge just oozing out of those front benches. Rural people have beaten the NDP time and time and time again. Now we have this Riversdale rural revenge that picks on rural people.

You promised the cost of production, more money for farmers, and you would build a better life in rural

Saskatchewan. You broke that promise. You didn't make the changes in time for GRIP; you didn't get in court in time to change it. And now you're trying to say, well I'll deem it all appropriate. I'll rewrite history.

And people are saying: uh, uh, not in my community; not in my farm. And the judge said that today. And that's the most damning thing that can happen to an administration, is when a judge says in a prima facie case, you're wrong. You have not done the proper thing for people. You have broken the law. And if you come in this legislature and say, well we'll change history and we'll get it all right because we'll change the law, people are not going to accept that. You can't rewrite history.

You're going to find that people are going to say to you, I don't want any part of your stories; I don't believe you when you say you're going to stick up for women or rural people or farmers; I don't believe you when you say you're sincere about drought. I know you have not a shred of evidence of co-operation with any administration — Alberta, Manitoba, the feds.

I talked to the federal minister, Mr. Speaker, who just recently dealt with the Associate Minister of Finance. He says, I can't believe this. They not only broke the GRIP agreement, but now they won't fund their honest share of a Bi-Provincial upgrader in rural Saskatchewan.

(1645)

This is jobs in the rural. Our heavy oil is processed in the rural; it's good for rural people. And the NDP administration said no, it's an Alberta agreement, a federal government agreement, a private sector agreement. We can break that just like we broke GRIP.

And the same applies, Mr. Speaker, when they look at other national programs. Not only that they wouldn't harmonize to generate money to pay for some of this stuff — and that tax is suggested by farmers and supported by business people across the province that gives you the kind of money necessary to help farmers and co-operate like other provinces are — but time after time after time, Mr. Speaker, they break their word.

They break their agreements with Alberta politicians, they break their word with Manitoba politicians, they break their word with American politicians, and they break their word with the federal government — contract after contract after contract. And finally this morning, again they got caught.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are going to ask these people — the new-elected NDP — to come clean with their constituents and do what you said you were going to do. Do what you said you were going to do . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, the rural members are a little edgy and you can hear them chirping from their seat because they're worried because their constituents are saying, well you didn't tell me that and I wouldn't have voted for you if you had told me that.

Well over and over again, it won't just be the people, it will be the courts, it will be other people who will say that you've made serious mistakes.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to talk about the pain already inflicted in rural Saskatchewan, not only in the grain sector but the livestock sector, because what these people have done to the livestock sector is unforgivable. It helps diversify rural Saskatchewan.

I remember when I was a professor at the university, the former minister of Agriculture, Gordon MacMurchy, used to go across the province and say: wheat's okay; that's all we need; we don't need diversification. And I campaigned against that. And a lot of people said, you know, we need diversification in rural Saskatchewan. It would be a good idea.

Well now we've got the same mentality going back. The NDP says, wheat only. GRIP is all based on wheat only — no recognition of specialty crops; no recognition of the livestock sector; no recognition of feed grain and processing. And now they said on top of that GRIP change they will specifically apply their rural revenge to the livestock industry.

And whether you're in northern Saskatchewan — east, west, or north, south, wherever — you have felt pain. And you're going to feel pain because the NDP have targeted the livestock industry and said, you've never really voted for us, so you're going to get yours.

And now it's backed up by Professor Furtan and others at the university who say this is awful. This is unconscionable. This is unfair. It doesn't make any sense. Just because some people who have livestock vote Conservative doesn't mean that the NDP have to pick on everybody that has livestock. But that's what you're doing. Every rural person, every livestock member, you're going out there and saying, I'll get you.

And I want to read to you what Mr. Furtan — Professor Furtan who does research for you, who you say that your listening to — has said about what you've done to the livestock industry: we anticipate as a result of the budget that was just brought down — particularly the FeedGAP removal and the cash advance — we anticipate a loss of 100,000 head in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now why is that part of a plan to help rural people? The oil patch is moving out. The natural gas industry is moving out. You all but closed the uranium industry in rural Saskatchewan. The northern people don't know . . . I mean, what are you going to give them if it isn't mining and economic activity right now? I mean, all of those things in rural Saskatchewan are hurt bad enough. And now you're saying if you are an honest-to-goodness farmer, you're not only going to get crop insurance taken away, but now I'm really going to take a run at you and your livestock business.

So Professor Furtan says: we anticipate a loss of 100,000 head in the province of Saskatchewan as a result of the brand-new NDP administration who said they'd go the other way. This matter was also studied by other people at the university, in the Department of Agricultural Economics. Mr. Furtan determined that the loss would be more equivalent to \$117 a head.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if you're looking at running a cow-calf operation and you're running into expenses that are running to \$117 a head, whether it's on the cow, whether it's on the replacement animals, whether it's on the heifers, or whether it's just out of the calves you're going to sell in the fall, any average at all will tell you that these people, the NDP, have stuck a stake through the heart of the livestock industry.

Furtan believes that over a three-year period Saskatchewan would lose up to 50 per cent of its current feeding sector. Mr. Speaker, one stroke of the pen by the NDP and the professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Saskatchewan says Saskatchewan people will lose 50 per cent of its livestock sector.

And they're standing on their feet, holier than thou, saying, well we can't help you if there's a drought or if there's problems or international things. It's just beyond our means. I said at the outset of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, that's the same line we heard when they said they had money. They haven't changed at all because 22 per cent interest rates is just like a drought. And you know it. And people said, where was the heart.

Mr. Furtan goes on and says: this would be equivalent to an extra 117,000 feeder calves being exported out of the province of Saskatchewan. Now we talked about feeding the livestock industry, putting people to work. They're lending money to packing plants and processing plants to stimulate economic activity in Moose Jaw, places like Saskatoon. And clearly they're going to shut them down because they won't have the feedstock to run through them.

Where's the plan, Mr. Speaker? They want our support because they've got a plan? If they'd even come forward with a plan in agriculture and viability for rural Saskatchewan maybe people would listen. Like what is it you're going to do? You've cut off gas. You've increased utilities. You've raised the taxes. No rural gas program. You've closed hospitals. No more nursing homes. Now you cancel GRIP. And you've ripped up the roads.

And now you're putting a stake through the heart of the livestock industry supported and evidenced not only by judges now but by the university and academics and researchers and others. The plan is a destruction. Now how can you sit there and smile and be so cocky about watching rural Saskatchewan go down the tubes? How can you even go back to your constituents? What do you tell your families? Boy I'd like to walk with you through your ridings — riding after riding after riding — and get you to explain this.

What is it? What is it that keeps you motivated about helping rural people when the university, the judge, the people, the public, the farmers, the ranchers, politicians on every side of you, international people say: what in the world is happening in good old socialist Saskatchewan? Back to socialism, back to 1950s, back to the '40s.

And then to put salt in the wounds, we find even the Communist parties of Ukraine and Russia signed agreements on international economic activity and research that the Reds right here won't sign. I mean,

you're isolated. You're in a world of your own.

And agricultural policy is the epitome of that, because rural people are the salt of the earth, and the very basis of life here in the province of Saskatchewan — cultural, social, religious.

Mr. Speaker, you know they laugh over there. And they say, well look at the numbers there. I'll tell you, young fellow, you wouldn't get elected if you'd have told the truth — you wouldn't have been elected. And that's a fact. So you can chirp all you like. You change your policies out there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — You go out with these policies and you hold a rally. I dare any one of you, any NDP member, to go out and hold a rural rally on your budget. You see if they're going to vote for you. Because they're going to remember, and if you would've told the truth, you know you're gone.

That's why you're gone now — because you can go back and say, well I'll try to fix it, I'll try to fix it, and I'll try to fix it. Well, Mr. Speaker, they'll remember.

Furtan adds that meat packing industries in Saskatchewan would lose some of its economics to reduce volume. One plant was shut down immediately. Mr. Speaker, they may not want to hear about this agriculture stuff, but the professor says . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And the member from Moose Jaw is chirping up, Mr. Speaker. The professor says one plant's got to go for sure.

Now is that the Moose Jaw packing plant? How will you feel about that? Your budget — NDP budget that cuts off the livestock industry — is going to cut off the feedstock for the packing plant in Moose Jaw.

The blame isn't going to be somewhere in Ottawa, my friend. The blame is going to be you and your policies. And you sitting there clapping for this Minister of Finance as he rips the heart and soul out of rural people around Moose Jaw and in Moose Jaw, who depend on agriculture. And you know that. So how can you think that it's a good idea?

Mr. Speaker, the long-run result is that Saskatchewan feedlots will have to ship animals to slaughtering plants in Alberta and the United States, says Professor Furtan. This further erodes the farm income situation in Saskatchewan, which means the crisis has a new crisis.

We had a crisis that we all campaigned in during last fall's election. And the NDP made all the promises. And now we're in and we've got a new NDP budget, and not only is there a crisis, there's a double crisis. It's called the pathetic response to the truth that the NDP are now pushing on the people of Saskatchewan.

An Hon. Member: — The missing brochure.

Mr. Devine: — The missing brochure. It's the second crisis. If you'd told them that you were going to rip out their crop insurance, devastate their livestock industry,

cancel the energy industry, cancel all the mining activities, raise taxes and raise utilities, and cancel their nursing homes, close hospitals, raise health care fees in rural Saskatchewan, do you know what? You wouldn't be here. That's the fact. That's the fact. And you can discount it all you like, but that's the truth because you wouldn't dare campaign on this. And the people know and they're not going to forget.

Furtan concludes by stating that this would have a negative impact on rural Saskatchewan because many of the jobs lost would be in rural Saskatchewan. So we have a crisis. Then your budget comes, there's another crisis in terms of income, then there's a crisis in terms of debt, and now there's a crisis in terms of rural jobs because the jobs associated with the livestock industry have several multipliers. In fact some of the best multipliers you can see are in the livestock industry. And why the depth in some jurisdictions in Canada, in the United States, are stronger than Saskatchewan is because they have diversified, and it's more intensive.

And all economic studies show that even socialists that go to school learn that. You learn the fact that if you spend money in diversification in the livestock industry in rural Saskatchewan you will make them stronger. And as a result, Mr. Speaker, they will then invest in infrastructure that helps them. They'll invest in water supplies. They'll invest in wells. They'll invest in irrigation equipment. They will drought-proof themselves. They will put the right kinds of rotations in. They know they will be able to save some money. They have a combination of things that allow them to be stronger through all kinds of economic conditions.

Mr. Furtan goes on and says, one could argue that the FeedGAP program makes money for the province of Saskatchewan rather than costing the province. Well, Mr. Speaker, Professor Furtan says the FeedGAP program makes money for the province of Saskatchewan, doesn't cost the province money.

Now imagine if you're investing in people in rural Saskatchewan and you're giving them roads, giving them good education, you're giving them a protective mechanism to allow them to build up their livestock industry like we have in neighbouring provinces and states throughout North America. Imagine you're doing that and they're just getting on a roll and they are competing with Alberta — very competitively — and the United States and American producers. And they just get doing that and they go into a campaign, Mr. Speaker, and they vote for an NDP administration that says, we'll keep that up, we'll even do better, we'll give you the cost of production, better protection, all that kind of help for less money and less taxes — that's right — all of that for less taxes.

In fact when we said in the budget, Mr. Speaker, that the deficit would be 265 and with harmonization that would allow us to do it. The leader of the opposition at that time, the now Premier said, oh well I think that's fair enough. With a little bit of management we can fix that. We'll have an even lower deficit. And he's anticipating that it might even be \$500 million deficit there. And then we can even take 200 million out, and we can cut your taxes in rural

Saskatchewan and give you the cost of production and give you all of these things.

It's very nice to see the House Leader back, Mr. Speaker, because he was the guy that finally got defeated by rural . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I think the leader has been here a long time, knowing that we do not refer to members absent or present in this House. I think the member knows that.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Being near 5 o'clock, I move the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — Order, order. I know that the member realizes that that is unacceptable, when a member is still on his feet to interject and move that the House do now adjourn.

Mr. Devine: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy you gave me that . . .

The Speaker: — It now being 5 o'clock this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

CORRIGENDUM

On page 997 of *Hansard* No. 31A Monday, June 9, 1992, 1:30 p.m., the speech presented by Mr. Sonntag beginning in the fifth paragraph of the left-hand column, should read as follows:

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk today about an announcement made last Friday. The water supply situation in the most north-westerly part of my constituency is at a crisis situation. Water levels in lakes running east through the Cold Lake and Waterhen River basin is desperate. Resource owners on Lac des Iles and Pierce Lake are reporting water level drops of up to four feet. The Waterhen Reserve School has had to close several days due to lack of water. Compounding this has been the withdrawal of water by Esso Resources.

Since last fall water levels have dropped to where Esso has been restricted from withdrawing water from Cold Lake. They have applied for and received approval from the Alberta government to withdraw water from the Helene aquifer. Esso and the Alberta government argue that this has no substantial effect on the surface water. The users downstream of course argue that it does have substantial effect.

We have therefore set up a task force to examine the serious situation. The task force will be made up of the north-west Saskatchewan fresh water committee, the mayor of Goodsoil, local residents of the area, including Joseph Bighead and Waterhen Reserves.

I am confident that the task force will arrive at a satisfactory solution and am further very pleased that the department and Saskatchewan Water Corporation have taken the interest and initiative to involve local people in something that affects them so very directly. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

We apologize for this error.

[NOTE: The online version has been corrected.]