

July 7, 1992

EVENING SITTING

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

Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave of the Assembly to introduce guests please.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce through you, Mr. Speaker, and to the rest of the Assembly, some friends of mine in your gallery. All the way down from Onion Lake, some eight hours or nine hours driving from Regina, is friends of mine, Arnold and Emily Whitstone, and I'd like to ask everybody to join with me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Special Committee on Rules and Procedures
(continued)

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I began prior to the supper break to speak in this Assembly this afternoon regarding the motion that is before this Assembly, the motion that is going to draw an end to, or put a limitation on the bell-ringing in this Assembly, I indicated that as the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for the Moosomin constituency, as an MLA in this legislature and in this province, I find this rules and the change to the rules at this time very unbecoming in light of the number of the . . . the process that has taken place over the last few days and certainly the normal process that has followed in this House over the number of years that this legislature has evolved and worked in Saskatchewan, and certainly, legislative assemblies across Canada and in the democratic world.

I would have to say that many people are stunned and today I am stunned by the apparent arrogance that has been shown by the members opposite. In fact, the member from Regina . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I would remind the member for Regina Churchill Downs he has already spoken in this debate.

Mr. Toth: — I just want to bring the point, Mr. Speaker, that many people across this province feel that the mandate that was given to the government of the day back in October was not a mandate to allow a government to show arrogance and disdain for the democratic process, but a mandate that gave members of the NDP (New Democratic Party) the opportunity to show that they could work within the process, the guidelines of this Assembly, within the rules of the Assembly, and indeed, working together in co-operation with the opposition as parties have through the years, Mr. Speaker.

That people back in October 1991 believed that . . . in some cases many people believed, especially the die-hard New Democrats certainly, a new day had dawned on this province. Apparently today, Mr. Speaker, yes we do have a new day — a new day of government showing its disdain for the workings of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this government appears to be willing to change and twist whatever facts they deem necessary in order to introduce retroactive legislation in this Assembly. The Rules Committee talked in great detail about the bell-ringing process. And certainly bell-ringing has been a debate that has come and gone over the years.

It has been a debate that has taken place in rules committees, and I have only been in this Assembly since 1986 but I am certain that the debate on the rules and debate on the bells has come up continually. It has been an ongoing discussion. And certainly a number of members this afternoon brought out the fact of the bell-ringing procedures as they have taken place over the past number of years.

The debate today is whether this government should be allowed to go on and change legislation retroactively. And the debate on the motion before us is whether this . . . whether it should be allowed . . . the debate on bell-ringing should be allowed to go on for days or hours or even the debate this evening should be unlimited.

But what the public knows and what the opposition knows is that bell-ringing has very little to do with this decision. And, Mr. Speaker, and members on this side of the House and many members in this House have spoken of the fact that the public in general are fed up with bell-ringing. They're fed up with the stalling tactics of bell-ringing. They do not like that ability of an opposition, if you will, to stall the workings of government.

And back in '89 we heard that. Certainly it is something we have heard the last few days. I have run into it as well, but I can also assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the public have more disdain for a government that would bring in legislation that would retroactively change a contract. And that's, Mr. Speaker, that is where the public draw the line. They disagree with bell-ringing but if that's what it takes to let a government know that people have a concern and people are against a government using its strong-arm tactics, and, Mr. Speaker, I have had many people . . . In fact people walk across the street to compliment and to ask me . . . in fact, Mr. Speaker, just the other day asked if the bells were still ringing. Many people are concerned that we might allow the bell-ringing to stop, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I was able to assure the individuals that had come across my path that indeed to a degree the bell-ringing has ceased, that the Speaker of this Assembly had called the House back into order, that the Speaker had suspended the vote and asked the House to proceed and the vote on the contentious legislation was put on the shelf. I think, Mr. Speaker, if that vote would have or could have been put on indefinitely or for a long period of time, this House would certainly be willing and able to operate without any hindrances. And I believe the

members of the opposition and the members in this House over the last few days have indicated their willingness to work and to co-operate and to get on with the normal procedures that would take place in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen a number of Bills through second readings and into committee, and we have been through a few minor portfolios in estimates. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that there is a lot of work that remains to be done in this Legislative Assembly. And certainly it would be inappropriate for the government to ram through its legislation when there is so much other work that needs to be taken care of, so much other business that affects people right across the broad spectrum in this province.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the public knows very well — and I believe the media are well aware of it — that the only reason for the motion that we have in this Assembly today is the fact that a government got caught with its pants down and that farm families have become very disappointed in this government and they have taken the government to court.

And the members opposite know full well that the only reason that it suddenly became an emergency to limit the ringing of the bells was because every indication they have and we have and the public in general have is that the judge would rule against them in court and would rule in favour of the farm families. Because any judge looking at the case presented to him or her realized that in fairness the proceedings that were taking place, the reason for the court case, the lack of evidence by the government, indicated that the farm families that had taken the government to court were right on, were well within their rights, and to be fair, they indeed had the information necessary to confront the government. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have the Crop Insurance Corporation going to the court and suggesting that they would have the legislation needed, legislation which has precipitated bell-ringing in this Assembly.

What is really amazing, Mr. Speaker, is that a government can use a majority to tamper with the justice system, a majority to force judges to rule in favour of an NDP government. I believe it is very appalling, and I believe every member opposite should be ashamed that they would allow the front benches to dictate how this House is going to operate.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I find it very hard to believe that many members on the opposite side of the House and back-benchers on the government side of the House would find it easy to go into their constituencies, especially in rural Saskatchewan, and tell people that it's okay for a government to retroactively change a contract; and if indeed they are challenged in court and they don't have the wherewithal or the defence needed, then to turn around and bring in legislation that would change the rules and leave individuals out in the cold.

I believe many members . . . If from what I'm hearing from my constituency and from many people that I have run across in the last month or so since the bells first started to ring, many of the NDP members would be ashamed and

would feel . . . would be hanging their heads as they met their constituents and let them know. And their constituents would be condemning them for betraying them and betraying the trust they put in them when they voted for them last October.

Mr. Speaker, what we have here today in this motion is the government, the NDP government showing the people of Saskatchewan just how important the rights of people are. And it would appear to me and I believe to many members and many people across this province that the rights of individuals are not important at all. In fact, it wasn't that long ago that one of the MLAs of this Assembly suggested that the process was more important than the rights of an individual. And it would appear that again this government is showing that same disdain.

I believe if the rural members in this Assembly, and rural NDP members really believed in the rights of individuals — the rights that I believe that the member from Regina Churchill Downs talked about when he talked about Mr. Douglas and the rights that Mr. Douglas stood for when he decided to get involved in politics, maybe even Mr. Blakeney — they would stand up in this Assembly today . . . And we have heard on numerous occasions this afternoon from a number of members who have indicated that they are prepared to stand, and certainly they will have the opportunity to stand, stand in this Assembly and let their constituents know why they support such a Draconian motion brought to this Assembly.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, these NDP members would be standing up for what is right. In fact maybe they need to speak out against the move by a very few . . . a small group of people on the front benches to let them know, listen we . . . yes we decided to run as NDP candidates but we didn't run on this platform. We ran on the idea of helping people and working together with people, not using an iron hand or an iron . . . closed fist to rule. They would take the time to speak in this Assembly to at least let their constituents know that they have been hearing what their constituents are saying.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, if they have any moral integrity at all, they must stand in this Assembly to defend the rights of individuals, speak out against this motion that's been presented to the House, stand up and speak on behalf of their constituents. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I believe that is the only way they will show their constituents that they are actually doing their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the motion that has been presented to the Assembly today and brought forward to this Assembly, I believe was brought forward under, if you could use the term, at a period or a time of duress and distress. I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, now was the time, in light of the decision, in light of the ruling that the Speaker of this Assembly brought down a few days ago asking the members, the Government House Leader and the Opposition House Leader and the two party leaders, to sit down and follow the normal procedures in this Assembly. I don't believe that this motion is appropriate at this time, and it is unfortunate that we are indeed debating such a motion.

(1915)

Let us take a quick look as to why the motion is before us. I look at the *Leader-Post*, June 13, 1992. This was just shortly after the legislation bringing in the farm security Act that would have brought in the retroactive legislation working against the farm families of this province was introduced and the bells began to ring. The Speaker of this . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I would remind the member from Pelly and the member from Kindersley that it's their duty to allow the member from Moosomin to have his turn at speaking. If they wish to have something to discuss, please go behind the bar. All right?

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government House Leader indicated that the government had no choice but to unilaterally attempt to rewrite history with its changes to the gross revenue insurance plan. Mr. Speaker, we all know the debate that has taken place regarding the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) question. And the House Leader went on to say . . . and the article goes to say: the stand-off goes back to the spring when the government changed GRIP but missed the May 15 deadline.

And then it also brings out the fact that farmers decided to speak out. They took the time to come to this legislature and speak out. They spoke out in rallies across this province.

And yet the Government House Leader, in co-operation with his front bench members, decided that it was still more appropriate to follow the urging of their Crown corporation, their Crop Insurance Corporation, rather than listen and stand up for the basic rights of individuals. The article goes on to say Lingenfelter wouldn't tell anyone Thursday what was in the Bill, but he admitted Friday it's intended to retroactively clear up . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I must remind the member again that the motion before the Assembly is that the second report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures be now concurred in. There is no mention at all in that report on GRIP. I have allowed members to make a connection between this and GRIP but not then to go into a detailed discussion on GRIP as to the advantages, disadvantages of GRIP . . . have nothing to do with this motion. That we can discuss at another time. It has nothing to do with this motion and I ask the member to please stay within the motion that is before us.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for your ruling and I certainly am aware of the ruling that was made earlier today. And I must also indicate to the people of Saskatchewan that the bell-ringing question and the motion before this Assembly ties directly to the retroactive legislation, and that is the case scenario that . . . And I don't intend to get into the details of GRIP, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate that, but I certainly must take the time to tie the reasoning for the motion, and I appreciate your ruling.

Mr. Speaker, at the time when the bells began to ring in this Assembly, and we're all aware of the 1989 commotion that arose in this Assembly when the

government of the day brought forward a piece of legislation or introduced a piece of legislation that would have allowed for the splitting off of SaskEnergy from SaskPower and would have allowed people of Saskatchewan the opportunity to take an equity position in their SaskEnergy corporation and the members of the opposition . . . or then opposition, now government, at that time indicated that it was fundamentally wrong for the government to make those kind of decisions and walked out and rang the bells.

In the June 15, '92 edition of the *Star-Phoenix* a headline reads:

Bell-ringing comes back to haunt NDP.

Devine pledged he would move to limit the length of time an opposition could ring the bells. But he couldn't get the required agreement from the NDP who hated the thought of losing such an effective weapon.

That is back in 1989.

Mr. Speaker, farmers right across this province believe in keeping your word. And their form of contract in most cases is on a handshake and your word better be good. Your word better be your bond. However we find that this piece of . . . or this motion will allow this legislature to give the government the opportunity to not only break its word but to break what I would consider a legal and binding contract.

Another article talking about the bell-ringing: bell-ringing halt legislature. There are two issues at stake in this current impasse at the legislature. One is the opposition's use of the division bells as a tool to block introduction of legislation. The other is the Bill itself which we're told will retroactively change a contract. It is an identical tactic to the one used by the New Democrats when they were in opposition to block introduction of a Bill to privatize SaskEnergy. The NDP let the bells ring for 17 days and didn't return until the then Devine government agreed not to proceed with its SaskEnergy Bill. And the writer of the article goes on to say: but now it's apparent the New Democrats have totally botched the entire GRIP issue. They came to power promising to improve the insurance plan to farmers and have instead turned it into a holy mess. Basically the government has turned this into a public policy nightmare and deserves the grief it's getting.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, as I have talked to people and laid out the facts before them regarding bell-ringing, and indicated that I myself am not a person in favour of bell-ringing and feel that we should have a more appropriate form of speaking out and at least informing people of legislation that we feel would be very harmful to the rights of individuals across this province, that people have supported me on that. But people have been very strong in speaking out and voicing their opinions when they feel a government is working and ramrodding changes against them.

Another article, another commentator says, indicates: no quick solution to the GRIP debate. And he's talking about the debate that was taking place regarding the question of

the Bill and the bell-ringing itself. And in this article it says: nor do the PCs (Progressive Conservative) have to give in quickly. At least not with the court case giving them justification for not allowing the legislation to be introduced. There was little pressure, little pressuring the PCs to end their walk out. Moral hazards and adverse crop selection are the polite terms they use to describe the '91 GRIP shortcomings.

What the writer was suggesting in this article is that people across the province, at the time when the bells first began to ring, were saying, listen, the argument that moral hazard is the reasons for changes to a farm program are not good enough.

And I think if you take a very close look, Mr. Speaker, you would find there are very few people that really would be termed or considered as having . . . using, abusing the farm programs. I don't know of anyone, any program that government brings in that will not find one person or other abusing it. But the percentages are very, very low. This motion, Mr. Speaker, is going to take away people's rights to express their views.

But what about the leader, the Premier of the province? What has the Premier of the province indicated regarding the motion before this Assembly and regarding the ringing of the bells and regarding the Bill that precipitated the ringing of the bells? In the *Star-Phoenix* of June 23, '92:

While he said he can see the Tories' point, the premier said the government won't withdraw its legislation.

"The substance of what we did is right. And if it's the substance which is at issue in terms of our fiscal picture and the like, process becomes a little less important."

I find that appalling. I find that very distasteful. I find that any Premier who would indicate that the process and the reasoning for an opposition standing up for what it believed in, standing up for the rights of individuals is right, and yet to turn around and say that they will not change their minds on that piece of legislation, appalling.

He goes on to say:

"I worry about contracts and all of that. I mean, one has certain rights."

We in Canada, we in the province of Saskatchewan, have certain rights. We have the right to speak our mind. We have the right to make a business decision. We have the right to go where we please in this country. In fact the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which the Premier of the province was involved in back in the late '70s, early '80s, has expanded that right and in some cases, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, much to the chagrin of our country. But I believe yes we do have rights but we also have responsibilities. As elected members of this Assembly we have a right to stand here and speak out with one voice and represent our constituents, but we have a responsibility to represent them truthfully and honestly and to respect their rights.

And so he says:

"I worry about contracts and all of that. I mean one has certain rights. That's where the merit of the PC walkout is."

And then he goes on to say:

"But we've got the point, and the public has that point, and they can use that (point) . . ."

However he still says we will not . . . we have no intention of pulling the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, that's where the walk-out and that's where the bell-ringing differs from 1989. The Premier of the province of Saskatchewan recognizes the rights of individuals, recognizes the rights of the opposition to stand up for those rights, recognizes the fact that many people have spoken out against the legislation as it has been presented, and said he's listening. And we have heard him time and time again talk about the consultative process, talk about the consultative process, talk about listening. And yet, Mr. Speaker, as the House Leader indicated, as soon as the bells were ringing and as soon as he felt that the process was wrong, we still will not remove our legislation. We will not change the legislation; the same with the Premier. So I ask you: is he really listening?

That's where this process differs from the bell-ringing of 1989. Because the premier of the day was listening. The premier of the day and the government of the day pulled the legislation and put it on the back shelf in this government, and the House came in and operated, although as members indicated at that time they said they would make the province ungovernable. And certainly it was very difficult forming and running good government for the last two years of the former term.

The article also says:

Romanow said he didn't like leading his own party out of the legislature in 1989 when he fought a then-PC government bill. He said he worried he might have to return before gaining any concessions.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that is an interesting comment. That is very interesting because the NDP of the day, the then opposition, believed they had a very legitimate reason to walk out of the Assembly. And they believed that the only way they could come in was with a concession from the government. And before the bell-ringing ceased, yes, the government leader and the opposition House leader and the two leaders got together and there was a concession made, and the House came back.

But what have we received today? What have we seen today? Have we seen any indication by the government that they are going to give a concession? That they will indeed allow the people of Saskatchewan to have their rights? That they will indeed speak out and listen to the people of Saskatchewan? No they haven't.

I would suggest it is obvious that the government still haven't got the point. I would have to wonder if even the Liberal leader has the point. In a comment in the June 17 issue of the *Leader-Post*, the Leader of the Liberal Party said, "... the Tories have proved their point and should return to the legislature."

(1930)

Mr. Speaker, the rules of the Assembly ... by returning to the legislature this opposition would have then shown to the people of Saskatchewan that they didn't have the ability to stand up to a government and let them know that what they were doing was wrong. Because the moment we would have returned to this Legislative Assembly, the Bill would have received first reading. It would have been on the floor of the House. And indeed, Mr. Speaker, the process would have been in motion and the court could have proceeded, and for all intents and purposes, the case against the government would have been very sound. The farmers would have lost their day in court.

I find it interesting that at one moment the Leader of the Liberal Party would find it reprehensible that the House would bring in such a motion and at the same time turn around and support the government in their efforts, such as she did yesterday when she voted for the government against rural Saskatchewan on the rural development Bill.

Mr. Speaker, we are all elected to bring the views of our constituents into this legislature and base our decisions on the views of our constituents and of people. Not only are the members opposite ignoring the wishes of people, they are doing so while claiming to be fair by claiming to have democratic rights and freedoms in mind.

Mr. Speaker, I have never heard such outrageous justifications and I beg to wonder if indeed the NDP members really believe it themselves. If the question were posed to people — do you think there should be a limit to bell-ringing? — people would say, well of course, yes. Most people would say we should limit bell-ringing.

As I have indicated earlier, members on this side of the House have also agreed. But as I've also indicated, Mr. Speaker, this is not the real issue before us this evening.

Ask the public whether they think a government should be allowed to break contracts with over 50,000 farmers and see what kind of response you get. I'm sure many people who were involved in Saskatchewan Pension Plan think the same thing.

I know what kind of response you will get because, Mr. Speaker, I have had many phone calls and as I've also indicated, I have had people actually cross the street to talk to me because they wanted to ask me about what was happening. Very concerned and, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't just farmers or farm families, it's business people, wage earners in my communities who have come, who have talked to me, talked to me at functions like the centennial celebrations in Whitewood this past weekend, talked to me at parades in my constituency, talked to me at a camp that I was attending.

People from right across this province, pastors have talked to me and asked me about the process, and as I have explained the process, Mr. Speaker, I find people are more than supportive and they're not supportive simply because it's a Conservative opposition that has raised the question. They are supportive because they fundamentally believe in the rights and freedoms of individuals and they fundamentally believe that any government, regardless of how large, should not unilaterally use its mandate to change contracts.

And I would almost think, Mr. Speaker, members opposite if they were honest with this Assembly would also indicate that they have had many calls — many calls indicating that the Tories are on the right track, many calls that would agree with this article, *Leader-Post*, June 13:

Good for the Tories.

Their decision to ring the division bells to stop the retroactive GRIP legislation from being introduced at least until Monday's court case is likely the smartest move they have made ...

The facts be known, the Tories are right on. The NDP government is dead wrong.

Moral righteousness ... (that's what this question is all about).

And right now, the ... reasons for blocking the government's legislative agenda and effectively holding the province hostage is far more justifiable than the reasons for the NDP's 1989 walkout ever hoped of being.

When the NDP walked out of the assembly April 22, 1989 it was strictly over philosophical difference of opinion. No matter how rancorous the SaskEnergy debate became, history can record it as nothing more than a difference of political opinions.

However the Tories have now walked out of the assembly over a matter of law — one the NDP is now attempting to rewrite so as to appear ... they have done nothing wrong ...

This is why the PC's bell-ringing is completely justifiable ...

... it is the Tories who are clearly on the (right) side ...

And, Mr. Speaker, we've seen a few polls taken lately, we've seen the media have gone and talked to individuals. One news broadcast I happened to watch, one of the media had gone out to the Farm Progress Show when it was progressing in this province and in Regina, and talked to a number of people that were involved in the show — visitors, people who had displays — and it was interesting, Mr. Speaker, to note that there wasn't one person that believed the government was doing the right thing, and that believed the opposition had done the wrong thing in leaving the Legislative Assembly.

And of everyone of the suggestions put forward, most people suggested that bell-ringing in itself was wrong, but in view of the legislation brought before this Assembly by this government, the bell-ringing at this time was the appropriate thing to do, and the opposition had done the right thing.

Also in the *Leader-Post* about that same time, a survey of farmers at the Farm Progress Show suggest the Tories are on solid ground with most of those interviewed by the *Leader-Post*.

A gentleman from Saskatoon said I don't think the government should be able to easily change something they set up like that. I don't really support them walking out. And I think they should stay there to do the business of the province. But I don't support a government that makes wholesale changes to programs people have to put their life into.

A gentleman from Redvers said, yes, I do believe. I don't like the idea of it being retroactive, the Bill they're introducing. I'm not saying the old system was the best, and I'm not saying the new system is any better, but I support the Conservatives.

A gentleman from Canora: yes, I do support the bell-ringing. The main reason is I believe last year when they initiated the program, they guaranteed us they would not change the program unless they gave us due time. In my opinion, the time period was too short. In all honesty, I believe the old program would have benefitted me more than the new one.

A gentleman from Palmer, he said, yes, I certainly do as well. I think they have a pretty good deal going, and then Romanow turns around and tries to wreck it.

A gentleman from Moose Jaw: yes, I agree with them. Somebody's got to stop the government. Otherwise they'd pass laws and do whatever they want to do.

Another gentleman from Moose Jaw also suggested he believed in the changes . . . in the bell-ringing because he didn't believe in the retroactive changes.

And yes, there are a couple gentlemen who didn't believe totally in the bell-ringing but they certainly believed in the process and felt there should be another method of addressing the problems that are generated by governments, regardless of what political stripe they are, of being able to retroactively change legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, this debate that has taken place over the last three weeks or so, Mr. Speaker, is on a lot of people's minds and a lot of people are concerned.

I believe right now that people are not on the side of the government, and they're not on the side of the government because they see this government as forcing the rule change in order to tamper with the judicial system.

And maybe some members may not appreciate that and may not like that comment. They will try to say that the opposition is blowing things out of proportion. But I

believe many members know well that the opposition is speaking a lot of truth in this Assembly this afternoon and this evening.

The NDP know that the deputy minister of Agriculture told the court that the government's defence in case . . . the case against farmers was a retroactive change to its Bill. That is their only defence, Mr. Speaker.

Is that the reason we're . . . is that the real reason we're addressing the motion before us this afternoon? I believe it is. I believe that the real reason we are addressing this motion this afternoon is because the government has found itself in a corner. And rather than admitting they made a mistake and rather than, as we have suggested over the past number of weeks, maybe opening up the doors for alternatives, rather than sitting down with the opposition and heeding the advice presented to this House by the Speaker of this Assembly, the government has decided to move retroactively.

And if they couldn't retroactively change legislation, they would then move to change the rules unilaterally, without the consent of members on this side of the House.

If justice were allowed to be served without the NDP tampering with the courts, the government would be forced to comply with the ruling, which they have been advised will not be in favour of them.

I'm not surprised by the fact that the NDP want to cover their excuse for an Agriculture minister. I'm not surprised that the only way they can accomplish this goal is to tamper with the judicial system. And I'm not surprised, Mr. Speaker, that this motion and the timing of this fundamental rule change apparently has the support of rural NDP members.

I would have thought they would have had more backbone than that; that they would have at least taken the time to stand in this Assembly to speak out on the fundamental principles of democracy and freedom and the rights of individuals, and the fact that no government, regardless of political persuasion, should be allowed to use its mandate and its large majority to change the rules and force members who have no control and no opportunity at all to really speak out, other than through the opposition members in this Assembly, force people across this province just to accept the government's changes at will.

And I believe their constituents did too as well, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sorry to say that the people are disappointed, once again, by members on the government side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, when the opposition walked out of this legislature over the sneaky introduction of a Bill that would bring the agriculture industry to its knees in this province, it was the right thing to do, and I've already indicated it. And the people supported it. I don't believe the people would support this motion in light of the government breaking contracts, in light of the government pushing undemocratic and immoral legislation. If this government was more interested in protecting the rights of people rather than covering the

hide of their sorry Agriculture minister, we wouldn't be debating this motion in this legislature today.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is not a concurrence of the meetings of the Rules Committee, and each member in this Assembly knows it. Each member of the media knows it. And, Mr. Speaker, the public knows it.

Mr. Speaker, when we look back to 1989, and we're talking about the bell-ringing, I first of all go to an article, June 19, 1992, and it refers back to the debate which took place in 1989. And it says:

Former justice minister Bob Andrew and then Opposition leader Roy Romanow eloquently debated the merits of bell-ringing during an exchange in the Saskatchewan legislature in the spring of 1989.

Andrew told the legislature that "this tactic, left unchecked and left unchanged, violates the fundamental principle of . . . our democratic parliamentary system, and that being the principle of majority rule — the right of the people to be governed by the party of their choice".

Equally convincing, Romanow called the NDP's use of the tactic to prevent the privatization of SaskEnergy "the best act of participatory democracy that I've seen in Saskatchewan since medicare, and it worked".

Yes, Mr. Speaker, in 1989 there was bell-ringing. In 1989 we had an ongoing debate regarding rule changes. And in 1989 we also found, Mr. Speaker, that a compromise was reached. A compromise that wasn't favourable to the government of the day, but a compromise that allowed this Assembly to proceed with the ordinary process of government.

(1945)

However, at that time, because of lack of consensus, it didn't address the real concern of bell-ringing, and the ability of the opposition, regardless of who they are, to speak out and represent its constituents.

Mr. Speaker, in 1992, we have a government of some 55 members. In 1989 we had a government of, I believe, 34 elected representatives and 28 opposition members — a substantial difference in numbers and a majority.

Mr. Speaker, the government of the day did have the majority. If they had desired to work and rule against the proper process they could have forced through changes to bell-ringing. But the government of the day chose to work through the process, work with the members of this Assembly, work with the opposition. And certainly it has taken, and I suggest it would take, some time yet to arrive at a proper consensus to address this position on bell-ringing.

When we looked back to the 1989 debate many members of the NDP Party at that time, members in the opposition, raised a number of concerns regarding the proposed changes to the rules. The member from Regina Rosemont

suggested what this government wants to do is ram through its own political agenda so that it can carry on its maniacal course.

And everybody on this side of the legislature, now everybody in Saskatchewan, is saying shame. Shame to that government that is more interested in its own narrow, partisan political purposes than it is in the real problems facing people in Saskatchewan. And that was in 1989. And I don't think times have changed, Mr. Speaker, other than the fact that the members that were making these comments are now members on the government side of the House.

This is what the member goes on to say: does this motion enhance and strengthen the democratic operations of this institution or does it weaken it? And, Mr. Speaker, I think the only conclusion that has been drawn to that is in fact it has been weakened. Well if it was weakened at that time, Mr. Speaker, what is it today?

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that this motion is undemocratic that we are debating. This rule change, which is, as you pointed out so quite correctly, Mr. Speaker, is an aspect of an attitude of authoritarianism well known to the people of this province and reflected by the commentators, political analysts and editorialists across this province that they can damn well do what they please, and I quote.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Rosemont also went on to say what kind of people, what kind of people I ask you would initiate this rule change? What kind of narrow-minded people? What kind of world view do these people hold that they think this little rule change will muzzle this opposition or muzzle the opposition of the people of Saskatchewan. If that was appropriate in 1989 I believe it is more than appropriate today.

And as well, Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Rosemont also went on to say: this government, because of its twisted priorities and its perverse and authoritarian streak, and well known by . . . a character trait that is embodied in certain members of the opposition, well known to us on this side of the House, they want a recorded division that is on the recording of votes to say, as it says here, the bells to call in the members shall be sounded for not more than one hour.

At that time we were suggesting an hour. This motion suggests 30 minutes.

Well, Mr. Speaker, those are just a few of the comments made by the member from Regina Rosemont.

But let's look at some other members of this Assembly. What about the member from Saskatoon Broadway — *Hansard*, May 29, 1989:

. . . the government's decision to bring forward this motion to limit the opposition's ability to ring the bells, if they so choose on controversial issues, is really a change in procedure and rules without the agreement of the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Broadway suggested that to have unilaterally changed the rules in

1989 would have gone against the procedures and rules of this Assembly where parties would agree.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Broadway continued:

This government, in my view, Mr. Speaker, will set a dangerous precedent if it uses its majority to force through the new rule changes. Never before have the rules changed without all-party consent. (And I repeat that, without all-party consent.) A departure now . . . And I want to remind the members opposite that a departure now will permit, will permit future governments to change the rules at will.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if it was disrespectful to force changes in 1989 when the government of the day only had a majority of some six to eight members, what is it today when the government sits here with some 45 or 44 members more than the total opposition combined?

The member also goes on to say:

There are times, however, I'd like to remind the government, when issues are so important, so extremely important, that it requires that the opposition's objections be put forward in an exceptionally forceful way.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is what my colleagues and I have been attempting to do this afternoon and this evening. We want the people of the province of Saskatchewan to know that we will stand up and speak out for them. We will stand up and speak on their behalf. We may only be 10 members but we're willing to speak for people right across this province whether they are urban or rural or in the two major cities in this province. We will speak as forcefully as we know how.

And I continue to quote:

Sometimes obstruction, Mr. Speaker, exerts pressure on governments to reconsider their position. Sometimes obstruction does that, and it encourages the majority government to move slowly and cautiously.

Bell-ringing, Mr. Speaker, can also be used to gain legitimacy because of what it accomplishes. It can be successful in forcing a compromise and it can turn divisive legislation into legislation of consensus.

And what have we seen today? What have we seen over the last few days in this Assembly, in this province? What has this motion brought before this House done for us? Was this motion brought through consensus? Is this motion now going to limit the opposition's ability to let people know about changes in legislation that we feel would affect their individual rights and freedoms? Is it going to allow the members of the opposition to effectively put out notices so people across this province can speak out before a government brings forward the Bill and allows it, or forces its passage through this Assembly? I say not.

What is three days? Three days isn't a very significant amount of time — 72 hours. Not a very large amount of time in which the opposition can rally people across this province in light of the fact that many people in this province really do not have the access to televised viewing of this Assembly so they can follow the proceedings. And many people across this province, even if they do have television available, especially at this time of the year, find it more appropriate and a lot easier . . . and certainly I think we've all indicated it would be a lot nicer at times to be able to leave this House and call it a working day at 5 o'clock and maybe spend an hour or two on the golf course. And I know many members across this House would certainly agree with me. And there are some pretty good golfers in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, quoting again from the member from Saskatoon Broadway. What I'm trying to say here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there are occasions in our history in this country when oppositions need the right to ring bells. And the member suggested that:

Oppositions don't take that right lightly, or they shouldn't, because they do so at their own peril (Mr. Speaker).

Now any opposition, any opposition in this province would not be doing its job if it failed to use all of the tactics and strategies available to it in preventing this government from going against its word.

And certainly I believe as I stand in this Assembly and as my colleagues stand in this Assembly, want the people of Saskatchewan to know that we need to speak out, and I would encourage members on the government side to stand up and speak out in favour of their constituents as well, as their member from Saskatoon Broadway suggested.

It should be a tactic that opposition parties can use in the future, but this government wants to put it to us.

Mr. Speaker, we agreed that bell-ringing . . . there should be limitations on bell-ringing, but we do not agree that a government should be able to limit the opposition into a time period that doesn't give it the opportunity to effectively present its case to the public.

And as my colleagues have suggested in the Rules Committee, Mr. Speaker . . . and the member from Shaunavon must be agreeing with me that he doesn't believe we should be interfering, or that his colleagues shouldn't be interfering with the rights of individuals. But in the Rules Committee in the debate that had taken place over the past number of days, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleagues had offered a number of suggestions to this Assembly, had suggested to the government members on the committee that the business of this House could proceed and that we should allow the process of the Rules Committee to continue to meet to hammer out an agreement that would limit the bell-ringing but would not restrict the ability of an opposition to withhold . . . or uphold legislation that they feel is very regressive.

What this motion does. Yes it restricts the bell-ringing, which in principle we have no problem with that part of it, but it also restricts the opposition's ability to hold legislation which — and in this case, Mr. Speaker — legislation which would take the feet right out from under a number of farm families in this province who have taken the government to court. And I don't believe that is appropriate.

And I'm sure that government members would also argue that in the future they would like to have the same opportunity. They would like to have the ability to put on the shelf a Bill that they feel any . . . The government of the day is bringing in a Bill that is very negative and very unresponsive and not responsible. They would like to be able to lift that Bill and put it on the shelf for a while, continue with the process of the House, and be able to talk to their constituents and talk to the people of the province so that they indeed would be able to make them fully aware of the limitations that any Bill would bring to people's rights.

Mr. Speaker, what this Bill does indeed goes totally against what the member from Saskatoon Broadway said as well. And I quote:

This government doesn't want the opposition to be able to protect the public from unwarranted attacks by the members opposite. That's what this government doesn't want. They don't want an effective opposition.

That's what the member of Saskatoon Broadway said regarding the government in 1989. The member from Saskatoon Broadway also indicated:

You want to limit our ability to represent the citizens of Saskatchewan, and I'll tell you this: you may get away with it, but you will pay dearly, members of the government, you will pay dearly in the next election.

Possibly in October of 1991, yes we did pay dearly. And maybe the member was right. But I would suggest today that if the people effectively knew or actually knew what the real intent and purposes of the NDP government was prior to the October 22, 1991 election, the results would be substantially different in this Assembly today.

The Conservatives may or may not have formed government, but certainly the numbers on the government side of the House and the numbers on the opposition side of the House would be considerably different. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, if an election were called today that the people of this province would indicate their preference for a much stronger opposition if not a total change in government. And I find that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, being very unprecedented that a government could fall from grace so quickly.

And then the member from Saskatoon Broadway also suggested:

And then we're on to rule changes without the consent of the opposition. And never in the history

of our province have rules changed without all-party agreement. But you people are going to sock it to the opposition, and you're going to sock it to the people in the process.

(2000)

The member from Saskatoon Broadway believed that you needed all-party consent, you needed the parties to work together.

The Speaker of this Assembly in his recent ruling indicated that the parties should get together and iron out their differences. The Speaker of this Assembly asked the Government House Leader and the Opposition House Leader to sit down and find a compromise and come out with a ruling that would allow the House to proceed, that would meet the needs of all parties involved.

And what have we found? When in opposition the NDP believed in the process of consent and consultation. In fact, they talked about it very dramatically in their throne speech, and yet since that throne speech, since the election day, what have we found? Have we found a government that's been willing to consult? Have we found a government that is willing to sit down and negotiate?

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, no we haven't, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would seem to me that there is no intent on the side of the government to negotiate. For even after the Speaker's ruling, the Opposition House Leader, the deputy leader, the opposition leader have been in consultation with the leader of this province, with the House Leader of this province, have written letters and have basically heard nothing until yesterday when the Opposition leader finally had a chance to sit down with the Premier of this province. And they both arrived at the consensus that the Government Whip and the Opposition Whip should sit down and work out the process of rule changes. And yet what do we find today, less than 24 hours later, a motion in this Assembly to stymie the ability of the opposition to withhold . . . or to hold the government to task.

Back in 1989 the member from Saskatoon Broadway said:

They're concerned about bell-ringing. Well what about the people of Saskatchewan, and what about their hopes and dreams and future? It's time you people started paying attention to the real needs of Saskatchewan people.

. . . and I just want to remind them again that their decision to come forward with this motion without the consensus of the members opposite, the members of the opposition, will set, and does set, a dangerous precedent in our province. It sets a dangerous precedent that the majority in this province, the members of this government, will force its will through the new rule change.

I just want to remind the member opposite that this departure from history and procedure, where we've had all-party consensus in terms of rules

changes, will permit future governments — and I just want to remind them of this — it will permit future government to change the rules at will. And I want to remind the members opposite that some day you will be the official opposition, some day soon.

And it's very interesting to note that this member would talk about the fact that to change the rules at that time would give the government, a future government, the ability to change its rules at will. And today we're debating the very same motion which at that time didn't pass because there wasn't a consensus and today the government is indeed doing what they said. The NDP party is indeed doing what they said they wouldn't do while in opposition. I find that very hypocritical. I find that very hypocritical, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are other comments made by the member from Saskatoon Riversdale. We can get into many other comments. What about the member from Saskatoon Sutherland-University: I would say this about this particular motion on bell-ringing. Would that both the government and the opposition would sit down together and co-operate with one another to effect some sort of, if not reconciliation, at least some sort of communication on this issue, so that we can get beyond it to deal with the public's business.

Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I fear today that even the ability of this opposition to stand in this Assembly today and to speak out on the motion, to speak out against the forces that the government are putting in this House, to speak out against their ability to ram this motion through, I will be stymied in the future days. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that even though we would speak out forcefully and lay out the reasons for our opposition to this motion, even though we would suggest the fact that over the years and time and time again, whether it be at the level of the federal government, whether it be at the level of provincial governments across this province, whether it be in the United Kingdom, never before has a government unilaterally changed the rules without coming to consensus.

And I don't believe the member from Saskatoon Broadway or the member from Saskatoon Sutherland-University have all of a sudden changed their principles or changed their belief that consensus is important, that is as important for governments and opposition to work together.

Mr. Speaker, by speaking out on this motion, we as an opposition realize that we will have a limited time, that it will be impossible and wouldn't be right for us to speak on this motion for time and eternity. But I'm afraid once this motion is passed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and if the government or whoever would force a vote on this motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan are the individuals who are hurt, who are robbed of the very democratic principles that this legislature stands for.

And as soon as this motion is put through you can believe me . . . and I'm sure that the Government House Leader is already just sitting on the edge of his desk waiting for the

moment to stand up and reintroduce the farm Bill, the farm legislation that would retroactively change a contract. And, Mr. Speaker, if the government of the day can change a contract for agriculture, the government of the day can also take the time to change contracts that would affect people right across this province.

And we've already seen that in the fact that they attempted to change the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. Yes they've watered it down but people did speak out. And maybe they listened, maybe they just listened, but I'm not quite sure. But certainly regarding this legislation, as I spoke earlier, the signs are there that they are not willing to listen. And that's why I find it very offensive that the government would move unilaterally to bring forward a motion that would give it the ability to stymie the opposition.

I find it very disturbing that the chairman of the committee would allow a motion to come forward that didn't have consent of the committee. I find it very disturbing that members on the committee would be so hidebound by the doctrine brought forward by the Government House Leader that they wouldn't be able to sit in committee and reason effectively and appropriately and would allow such a Draconian motion to be brought forward to this Assembly.

I find it appalling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have to stand in this Assembly today to lay out the reasoning behind the bell-ringing, the reason behind the motion that we are addressing in this Assembly, when there are so many other urgent pieces of business that this House should be addressing.

There are so many urgent concerns across — not only in the province of Saskatchewan, not only . . . and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are well aware of them. They have been in the media the last few days. In some cases there is drought in parts of the province, in other cases there is destructive storms, cases where people are hungry and line-ups at the food banks have increased. The number of people on welfare have increased.

The constitutional debate that is taking place. And this Assembly is addressing a motion that would give the government the ability to do as it pleases. And I find that offensive and I believe that the people of Saskatchewan are finding that offensive as well.

I believe that the people of Saskatchewan certainly believe that when they elected me to speak on their behalf, they believed I would take my place and speak out and represent them to the best of my ability. They not only believe that from me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but they believe that every person elected in this Assembly — members on this side of the House and the opposition, members on the government side of the House, back-benchers — also believed. At least I think they did. I think they believed they were rightfully coming to this House to represent their constituents but where are they today? Where are they when they should be speaking up?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's no doubt in my mind that members on the government side of the House and back-benchers would find it very offensive and would

speaking out against any government that would just take away the democratic rights and privileges that they take so much for granted.

We found it very easy to speak out against Eastern bloc nations. And people in the Eastern bloc countries are fighting today for the very freedoms that we enjoy. Because they indeed do not want governments again to come and rule their lives without giving them the opportunity to speak.

And what this motion does, Mr. Speaker, is takes away many rights, many freedoms of individuals to speak out. And it takes away my ability as an opposition MLA to stand up and represent my constituents. Mr. Speaker, I find therefore, it very difficult, and I will not be supporting this motion to unilaterally change the bell-ringing in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan at this time. Thank you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The NDP have introduced this motion to win a court case against Saskatchewan farmers. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know the circumstances of the court case. The government broke the contract and now they are trying to put in the fix and get out of their blunder.

Breaking contracts is not only a concern of farmers, but it's a concern of everyone in this province. A contract should be a sacred document and only changed by the terms within the contract as outlined or by agreement of both parties. I discussed the issue of contracts and the breaking of contracts with a representative of the Teachers' Federation.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. I'm having difficulty hearing the member, but the little that I do hear suggests to me that the member is off the mark. The question before the Assembly has to do with a report from the Rules Committee with respect to bell-ringing. The member's remarks have dwelt on nothing but the matter of contracts and it has nothing to do with the motion that's before us. I would encourage the member, as the Speaker has encouraged other members, to stick to the motion that's before us.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will try to keep my remarks germane to the topic of ringing the bells. And ringing of the bells, Mr. Speaker, is the reason what we're here discussing and the reason why the GRIP Bill has become so important. This Bill that's being presented, this motion that's being presented to the House, is simply a tool being used to get the GRIP legislation into this House. It's needed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the government to win their court case.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I attended the court in Yorkton where the GRIP legislation was being discussed, where the lawyers for the government were part of the circumstances that were taking place. The lawyer for the government said that it wasn't necessary for the GRIP Bill to pass in the legislature . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I'd like order from the government benches. And again I would remind the member that the issue that's before us is the report of the

Rules Committee. The member may wish to make connection between that report and other matters but the member should not dwell at length on those other matters.

The member should deal with the issue that is before us and that is the report of the Rules Committee and a motion to concur in that report. I encourage the member to regard the words to the Chair and to speak to the motion.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We feel that it's necessary, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have the privilege and the power to ring the bells on legislation that we find repugnant and distasteful in this House. This tool is used by the opposition to stop the dictatorial processes used by the opposition . . . by the government, excuse me.

(2015)

The opposition, in 1989, used this tool to hold up government legislation. In 1992 the opposition, with the roles reversed to 1989, used the same tools to hold up government legislation.

One of the items involved in the process in 1992, in holding up this legislation, was the terms of the GRIP Bill, and we felt that it was necessary as opposition . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. The Chair will determine when a member's remarks are in order and needs no help from the government benches. I ask the government benches to observe decorum and enable the member to speak and to give him the courtesy of doing so.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We felt that the use of the bell-ringing tool was very pertinent in the case of the GRIP legislation as we felt that the court case needed that legislation to proceed. By ringing the bells in that particular case, the government could not present that legislation as part of their defence in the court case. We rang the bells, Mr. Speaker, to prevent that from happening.

The lawyers in the case said it wasn't necessary to have the legislation, and yet the Government House Leader said that it was. We chose in this particular case to believe the Government House Leader, that he needed that legislation. By ringing the bells, we prevented that legislation from proceeding. This prevented the government from using that legislation in the court case to say that there had indeed been a letter sent out to farmers when there was not in fact a letter. We felt that the bell-ringing was necessary at that time to prevent the government from presenting in their GRIP legislation a clause which would retroactively determine the court case.

Mr. Speaker, if bell-ringing is limited to no more than three days, then the opposition's hands will be tied. The GRIP legislation, as had been presented by the Government House Leader, would have passed and farmers would have suffered.

Mr. Speaker, we need the tool of bell-ringing just in the case of the farmers down at Glasnevin who recently suffered a severe hail loss. Because we were able to ring

the bells, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were able to prevent the government's GRIP legislation from proceeding. This gives those farmers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, more protection than what they would have received otherwise.

I'm not sure how the members opposite can explain to those farmers why it was wrong for us to use bell-ringing as a tool to prevent that legislation from passing when those farmers know in their own hearts that it was better for them that that legislation did not proceed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP want the people of Saskatchewan to believe that bell-ringing and GRIP '92 are separate issues. That's not true, Mr. Speaker. The member from Regina Churchill Downs, who today seems to prefer to call himself the toy minister, spoke of bell-ringing in 1989 and using that time while the bells were ringing to gain public support. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1989 the NDP needed the 17 days to get the public interested in the issue of SaskEnergy. In 1992 when we rang the bells over the '92 GRIP changes we already had the support of rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, even the people of urban Saskatchewan understood bell-ringing on that particular issue. They did not understand the issues of GRIP but they understood the issues of breaking contracts.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition — today it's us, tomorrow it could be some other party — needs the power that this rule allows them to stop governments from illegally breaking contracts or any other type of rule that we normally live under. They need the power to stop a government from trying to break those contracts and using this House to make it legal.

The member from Regina Churchill Downs talks about going out and meeting people, about the issues of GRIP, while the bells were ringing. Mr. Speaker, SARM held their regional meetings while the bells rang and we took the opportunity to go out and discuss the issues of why the bells were ringing at those meetings.

Mr. Speaker, it was the perfect opportunity for the government to take that opportunity also to explain their GRIP legislation. There was an opportunity for the government to show Saskatchewan what was in that Bill and how it would benefit rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, while we rang the bells in June for the 18 days, we took the opportunities to attend the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and a number of other meetings around the areas. But the NDP MLAs did not attend.

At the meeting in Kipling, the deputy minister was the only government representative there. The minister for Rural Development, the member from Canora, did not show up at that meeting or any other.

No one at those meetings, Mr. Deputy Speaker, suggested to us, to me or to my colleagues who were in attendance, that we should stop ringing the bells. Their suggestions were that we continue to ring the bells.

At the Farm Progress Show, which took place at the same

time as the bell-ringing, there was no one suggesting to me that I should return to the House and allow that Bill to proceed. The more people I talked to at the Farm Progress Show, the more I knew we were on the right track. Some of those people were from my constituencies and some of those people were from the constituencies of the members across the floor. Not one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not one person wanted us to end the bell-ringing and allow that to proceed.

At this time, I would like to quote from the member from Riversdale on some comments he made on bell-ringing in 1989, and this quote is from *Hansard* of May 11:

That's the context in which this motion is to be done, and let's not fool ourselves as to what's happening here. This government, if it was really genuinely committed to democracy, would have, as much as it hurt the Minister of Justice, as much as he opposed what he did, they would have done it in the traditional and normal democratic way. Let's not be fooled about what's being planned here.

This motion gives the NDP the opportunity to ram through any legislation they desire, any legislation that suits their agenda.

As a new member, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm still learning the rules and procedures which govern this House. But it seems to me that the rules and procedures should be fair and equitable. The government should be able to present their agenda and the opposition should be allowed to express their views and the views of the public on the issues which arise. All of the rules eventually allow the government to have their way, to have their agenda met.

However, the opposition has one rule — the bell-ringing — by which it can force the government to seriously reconsider the legislation that they are presenting. This is an ultimate weapon for the opposition. Because it is the ultimate, last-resort action, it is rarely used. It has been used twice for an extended period in this House.

I am sure that when in opposition the NDP felt strongly about an issue but only once did they ring the bells for an extended period of time. Mr. Speaker, only once in nine years of the Conservative Party being in opposition, that being from 1975 to 1982 and again since last October 21 until now, have the Conservatives caused the bells to ring for any extended period of time. I'm sure that, Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have felt strongly opposed to some of the legislation that has come forward in that time period.

Since I have been in this House there has been other legislation which we opposed, which I opposed. We did not ring the bells for any length of time on any of that legislation. Even on Bill 18 last fall, Mr. Speaker, we did not hold up the House. While the current rules allow the practice of bell-ringing, that power is rarely, rarely ever used.

We might equate the power of bell-ringing to a strike. As opposition we could be considered labour; the government could be considered management. This

gives us the opportunity to withhold our services from the legislature. Management cannot proceed, as long as we have the bell-ringing power, with their agenda.

What this Bill does basically, Mr. Speaker, is allows the government, to use a union term, to bring in scab labour and allow the proceedings of the House to proceed regardless of what the opposition feels about it.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from *Hansard* of June 9, 1989 from the member for Saskatoon Sutherland-University:

And the question might well be asked then, of people across the province, what does this particular motion by the hon. member for Kindersley, the Minister of Justice, what does this particular motion, this proposal to change the rules, do to democracy? What does it do for the people of the province?

Does it do a service or does it do a disservice to the people of the province? Is it a genuine service to practical democracy and to facilitate democratic interaction in the province outside of this Assembly? And I think that's one of the hallmarks of scrutiny that this legislation has to bear. It isn't a question of whether it serves simply the process here in the Assembly, but we have to ask ourselves, does it do genuine service to the practice of democracy outside of this Assembly.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say in terms as forceful as I can that the present rule that we have in this Assembly guarantees — guarantees the democratic process outside of this Assembly. And that's why we on this side of the House, as New Democrats, are so insistent that this rule change be opposed.

That was a quote from the member from Saskatoon Sutherland, June 9, 1989. Mr. Speaker, we are just as outraged as Conservatives as the member from Saskatoon Sutherland-University was or as he claimed to be.

Mr. Speaker, bell-ringing was to be discussed in a co-operative manner during the Rules and Procedures Committee meetings. I attended the meeting of the Rules and Procedures Committee which the chairman called for the evening of July 2, 1992. The meeting was called at the earliest possible time after Mr. Speaker made his ruling to suspend the GRIP legislation. That ruling was a good and proper decision. Mr. Speaker's rationale at the time was to give the parties time to discuss and co-operate to find a solution on the GRIP impasse. It was indeed a good and wise decision.

This decision, however, was undermined when the chairman of the Rules and Procedures Committee called a meeting to discuss bell ringing as soon as possible after the decision had been made. Mr. Speaker made the decision to suspend the vote in the House on Monday, June 29. The House sat on Tuesday, June 30, a private members' day. On Wednesday it was July 1, Canada Day, a statutory holiday and therefore, Mr. Speaker, the House did not sit. Thursday, July 2, was the first practical time

that the committee could meet and it did so at 7 p.m. that evening.

I took the opportunity as an MLA to sit in on that special committee which was called to deal specifically and only with the issue of bell-ringing. While I had the opportunity to sit in there, Mr. Speaker, because I was not a member of the committee, I could not participate in any votes. The first and only item discussed at that meeting was a motion by the member for Prince Albert Carlton to limit bell-ringing, to limit bell-ringing to 30 minutes and a new rule, No. 55, to allow the opposition to suspend a Bill for three days.

(2030)

There was discussion around the table that evening. There were even some practical suggestions made, yet they were ignored and disregarded. Midway through the meeting, Mr. Speaker, one member said to me that at this meeting there seemed to be something going on here that we were not a part of, we being the members of the opposition. And that member was right, Mr. Speaker; there was a secret agenda. The secret agenda at that meeting was to change the rules to eliminate bell-ringing to allow the GRIP legislation to be forced through.

Mr. Speaker, that was very evident when I suggested that any rule changes should be dealt with as the rule changes previously agreed to in this House were being dealt with. Those changes and the manner in which they were being dealt with was to have a fixed period of time in this House in which those rule changes would be observed and then those rule changes could be reviewed and then renewed if the members of the House agreed, and if they agreed with all parties. In fact the rule changes were made in a manner of consensus within that Rules and Procedures Committee before they were brought to the House.

However at the meeting on July 2, the government members seemed willing to use a rule change which might only be in place for a short period of time to force through or to ram through their GRIP legislation. They seemed to be prepared at that time to allow a rule change on the bell-ringing to be in place for only a short period of time and then they would be again reviewed. But in that short period of time, in the case that we're discussing right now, would have amounted to 15 days because that is when our 50-day rule change review will take place.

This rule change would have allowed GRIP to have proceeded. After GRIP was in place it would not have been important to have the rule changes in place; it would not have been as important to have such a Draconian limit on bell-ringing. As long as GRIP passed that was the important issue, Mr. Speaker, not the bell-ringing. The government members seemed to be bound and determined to push through a vote on the motion by the member from Prince Albert Carlton — the motion to limit the bell-ringing to 30 minutes and to allow a three-day suspension of any Bill.

They totally disregarded any comments by the members of the opposition. They were unwilling even to allow time for the House leaders to discuss the issue. They were unwilling to allow any ideas or suggestions to be taken

back to their respective caucuses to be discussed.

It was only after the member from Morse suggested that the opposition would take as critical a look at this motion as was taken at the GRIP legislation when it was introduced — as you are aware, Mr. Speaker, the opposition rang the bells for 18 days on that legislation, and it was only after that statement and a statement by the chairman of the Rules Committee, and I quote: “I made it very clear I’ll be very, very reluctant to intervene” — only then did the government members discuss the situation amongst themselves, and then decide to allow the issue to be taken to their respective caucuses, and to allow the House leaders an opportunity to discuss the situation. The committee then decided to defer the motion to a meeting this morning, July 7, 1992.

It was only at that point that the government members were willing to be co-operative. I got a feeling from the manner in which the meeting of July 2 proceeded, that the government members came to that meeting with their minds made up, and closed to any ideas or suggestions. The government members were bound and determined to kill bell-ringing at any cost.

I would like to again quote from the member from Saskatoon Sutherland-University:

... the government has an agenda to ignore the legislative process ... and to, as a consequence, put forth a motion to muzzle the opposition, to muzzle the people of this province, and to change the rules for bell-ringing.

June 9, 1989, the member from Saskatoon Sutherland-University.

Bell-ringing, Mr. Speaker, was to be discussed in a co-operative manner during the Rules and Procedures Committee meeting. Instead today, the chairman came to the meeting with a prepared report, a report prepared before the vote was even taken. The opposition was totally ignored. The opposition, today, did not have the opportunity to put forward any suggestions for consideration. The chairman knew what the results of the meeting were to be before the meeting took place. The NDP Party was guaranteed a victory.

Today we’re supposed to be in private members’ day. In fact, the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow had a motion on the order paper dealing with parliamentary democracy. What a sham. The members opposite should be embarrassed. This motion today will effectively stifle the opposition’s ability to act on the people’s behalf.

I would like to quote from the member for Prince Albert Carlton, from the Rules and Procedures Committee meeting of July 2. The member said: “Because the item has not been brought to the House.” And in that sentence he is talking about the previous GRIP legislation.

... suspension should only take place after first reading or after ... (inaudible) ... In my mind it’s fundamental. An exclusion from debate in this legislature, before the legislature, is perhaps the worst abuse of all of any rule in our democratic

process. And that is why we feel this is urgent.

Why, Mr. Speaker, he feels that it is urgent that this motion come to the floor of the legislature to be debated and passed so that bell-ringing as a tool for opposition will be eliminated. At that meeting, Mr. Speaker, I asked the member from Prince Albert Carlton:

... did you feel the same way in 1989 when the bells rang on first reading?

The reply from the member from Prince Albert Carlton:

Did I feel as strongly about it as I did now? At that time I never thought ... I felt very much like Harold does. I felt very strongly about the issue.

And I would like to quote the Harold mentioned here, that is the member from Morse:

However there comes a point in time when you have to say in the public interest that you draw a line in the sand and that’s as far as you can go with it. And in other jurisdictions they do have some of those, and I outlined some of them — in the House of Lords in England, in the Senate. And that’s why I agree with the Senate. It’s a place for some public reflection, and they have done some reasonable work in some areas and I kind of buy that.

So again I asked the member from Prince Albert Carlton:

But did you feel at the time that ringing it before the Bill came to the floor of the House, that it was a major abuse of the system?

This was in reference to the ringing of the bells in 1989. The response from the member of Prince Albert Carlton was:

We knew what the purpose of the Bill was. It was there, it was spelled out, it was spelled out by those around. There was no assumptions as to what the purpose of the Bill was ... Well it’s another issue.

Mr. Speaker, maybe knowledge of what is in the Bills is another issue to bell-ringing, but it’s — in this particular case with the GRIP legislation — the lack of knowledge of what was in that Bill that was part of the cause for the bell-ringing. And perhaps that’s another one of the rules that we should look at at some point in time, is that Bills to be presented to the House, that the opposition members be given access to them before the Bill comes to the floor.

I’d like to quote again from the member from Saskatoon Sutherland-University. No I’m sorry, from the member from Riversdale:

... for the first time in the record of the province of Saskatchewan, although the olive ... they (did) come forward to change the rules of this House in the name of democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What kind of a double standard is this?

Mr. Speaker, what we are indeed seeing is a double

standard. Indeed from across the floor we see a fake concern for democracy. And I would like to quote again from the member from Riversdale, today the Premier of Saskatchewan, who on March 11, 1989, during the debate on the motion to limit bell-ringing said, and I quote:

What new-found democrats are these, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What new-found democracy is this? What kind of charade is this? What kind of an unprecedented action is it for these people to bring forward a motion for rules change without consultation . . . without any consultation from us; out of pique, out of pique.

They know that the people of Saskatchewan oppose what they have done and oppose it vigorously, and they wanted the opposition to do what was being done, and they've gotten beaten up. I don't mean beaten up politically; I don't care about the politics. They got beaten up on this fundamental policy of theirs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They got beaten up and now they're coming in and they're going to show us who the bosses are. Again, what kind of democrats are these?

A quote from the member for Riversdale, the Premier of Saskatchewan today.

Well I have an answer for him, Mr. Speaker. What kind of democrats are these? These are new democrats, the members of the New Democratic Party.

The only tools left to the opposition if this bell-ringing Bill passes will be to filibuster, will be to talk for hour on end. And some of our members have the ability to talk for hours on end but others do not.

Mr. Speaker, it's difficult to attract public attention of the men and women of Saskatchewan when the members of this House are speaking for hour on end. This motion takes away the opposition's rights to put forward the concerns of their constituents and the constituents of the rest of the province.

When we walked out and rang the bells, Mr. Speaker, it went far beyond our own constituencies. We were acting on behalf of all of the people of Saskatchewan.

The members opposite seem to have a very short memory when it comes to bell-ringing. They should think back to the comments that they were making in 1989 when a similar motion to the one at hand was being discussed. And this evening we have brought up some of their quotes.

Mr. Speaker, there was a massive outcry from the NDP that their democratic rights were being trampled upon. Again, I would like to quote from the member for Riversdale:

These are the people who say they're the defenders (and this was talking about the previous government). If they're the defenders, why didn't they approach us in this kind of fashion — traditionally — of trying to define the rules in a

way that we could all accept and agree, these self-proclaimed, new-found democrats.

The motions in the rules and procedures committees prior to this motion being presented to the House have been done through consensus, through unanimity. It was agreed that the motion would be handled by an all-party committee, that all members of the House today know that agreement was not reached. The government of the day did not strong arm the decision to force through the motion to cease bell-ringing. That would have been an undemocratic action.

But what is this government today doing? This morning, July 7, 1992, they forced this motion in committee and they will now attempt to force this vote to pass in this House. What we're seeing today, Mr. Speaker, is the socialist attitude for democracy, the attitude that what's yours is mine and what's mine is mine. Or to put it another way, that anything that furthers the socialist agenda is sacred and any method used to thwart the socialist goals is a sacrilege, a sacrilege even if it is the same method that was sacred in the hands of socialists in achieving their ends.

(2045)

Mr. Speaker, this reminds me of the action taken in the legislatures of Russia during the years of Stalin and in the legislatures of Germany prior to World War II. The legislatures there were dominated by Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. In both of those institutions the affairs of governments were performed legally, legally in the content of the law as it was written in those lands. Those dictators used the legislatures to carry out their dirty work. They stifled the opposition. In fact the members of both those houses were to respond as Pavlov's dogs responded to the whim and signal of their master.

The masters of this House, the Premier, expects that his back-benchers and even the opposition members to respond to his beck and call without even a whimper. If the Premier expects this opposition to roll over and play dead, he is very wrong. If he is so inclined, he is simply being arrogant and pompous. And I am not the only one who believes, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier is being arrogant and pompous in trying to stop the legislation . . . the legislature from having the power to ring bells.

If the opposition in some of those legislatures had had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to ring bells and stop the government maybe the Second World War would not have been necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote to you from a letter I received. This concerns the attitude that this government brings to this legislature. And it's a quote from a group of ladies who meet on Thursdays for tea and who watch the proceedings of this legislature. And I'll quote:

I am a retired housekeeper from the Plains Hospital. Every Thursday a group of ladies and I get together for tea, and when it's on, (we) watch the Legislative Assembly on the television. We have a lot of fun especially during the questions part.

When you said the Premier was pompous, we all started to laugh. You see we have always thought Mr. Romanow is pompous, and have said it many times in fun among ourselves. So when you said it too it was funny, and it made us feel important too.

Keep up the good work young man. There are some old ladies out here who enjoy some good debate.

And there is five names on here.

An Hon. Member: — Signed: mom.

Mr. D'Autremont: — My mother would write a lot longer letter than this, Mr. Speaker, if she took the time to write.

Mr. Speaker we're not prepared to surrender to such arrogance and undemocratic measures. The government has a fight on its hands because we will not sit still for this. The farmers of this province who will be directly affected if this motion is allowed to proceed will also not sit still on this. Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against the motion.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well it's again one of those days where one would have to say that it's distinctly not a pleasure to have to speak in this Assembly. Even though we fought hard in an election to win a seat here we never expected that the rights of individuals would be challenged by the government in such a manner, at least not so quickly into their mandate.

But then I suppose, Mr. Speaker, if you think about it for a while, when better to change the rules than early in your mandate, because if you do that and get all of the rotten things done quickly, you have the right to ram through anything you want for the next three years and you have very little opposition left. You destroy your opposition immediately at the outset, and in three years you hope that nobody has a long enough memory and you try to create some other subterfuge with the new issue and tried to get re-elected. Obviously I guess then when you think about it, we should have been expecting this from this type of a government.

I was appreciative, Mr. Speaker, when you earlier made your comment that you had allowed us to tie this piece of work to the GRIP issue. It is important that people do know that it is tied together. And your acknowledgement of our right to do that certainly reinforces the fact that the two go hand in glove.

The second report of a Special Committee on Rules and Procedures — it's a shame that we don't have the first report, but I'm going to just talk to you a minute about the word-by-word way that this report and rules is written. I believe it's important for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, to know and understand exactly what is in this second report.

Quite frankly, when it was read earlier today I expect that most folks really sort of thought it was one of those orders of business that naturally happen sometimes just before question period that really don't take a whole lot of effect on folks lives. I think probably most folks thought well,

here's an order of business, some housekeeping that is going to be tidied up by the Clerk, and likely didn't really pay that much attention to it. So what they probably missed was the reality of the dramatic effect that this report is going to have, not only on those of us who are in opposition but on their lives.

Mr. Speaker, the report goes like this in the first paragraph:

Your committee recommends the following amendments to the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*. The first recommendation is for the rule change to establish a time limit on the length that the division bells may ring during a recorded division. This change in the rules brings Saskatchewan into step with other Canadian legislatures.

Now let's just stop right there, Mr. Speaker, and see if it really does bring us into step with other Canadian legislatures. This is a misnomer because quite frankly other legislatures, while they don't allow bell-ringing, have made other provisions in order for oppositions to have tools to work with that allow the opposition to preserve the basic fundamentals of democracy . . .

An Hon. Member: — Name them.

Mr. Goohsen: — I will later. I will name them. The member has asked me to name them, and I will name the tools that they have after a while, but it's early in the evening and we've got a long time. In fact, Mr. Speaker, for the member opposite's benefit, I want to say that we as an opposition are here for a long time, not for a good time.

It is the responsibility of an opposition, any opposition in a democratic government, to make a government take time — that's our job. We didn't choose to be elected into opposition, but fate has done that and it has put a responsibility on to us. The voters have decided that we should be in opposition, and we will play that role and we will play it well. And our role is to stall the government long enough for people in a democracy to be able to absorb what is happening to them.

You have to take things easy in a democracy because otherwise you have a revolution rather than an evolution. And the people of Saskatchewan are not prepared to allow a revolution in their province. They want to go back to evolutionary changes that they can learn gradually to live and to absorb. This government has been intent upon creating a revolution through its legislative power.

And in other jurisdictions — I want to go back to discussing the actual report, because that in fact is what we're here for — the reality is that in other jurisdictions, as I was pointing out before I was so rudely interrupted, in other jurisdictions the folks have decided that ringing of bells is truly, not over a 17- or 18-day period of time, totally productive. Assemblies should in fact attempt to do some work.

But what they have decided is that there are other tools that can be effective, and so before they took out the bell-ringing, they put those tools into place and they

allow the oppositions the right to use those tools to bring about the kind of democracy and the needs of democracy that I explained to you a minute ago, basically providing the time for the people in the community to absorb what is happening to their lives as a result of legislative moves.

It goes on to say “. . . all of which have restrictions on the length that the bells may ring during a recorded vote.” Now of course those restrictions vary quite a lot throughout the Commonwealth and throughout our country and I think, in all fairness, it should have pointed out what those restrictions and lengths are. And I guess we'll have to ask our researchers to go into that a little more in depth so that we can understand it fully.

One of the things that is used, Mr. Speaker, as a tool for oppositions . . . and I guess the people of Saskatchewan should note here, Mr. Speaker, that people in the government side seem to find this rather hilarious. They sit and laugh jovially as they attempt to cover up their embarrassment at attempting to destroy the democratic process by giggling and cackling like a flock of drunken geese who have been feeding on some corn mash.

You will note, Mr. Speaker, that there are tools that other jurisdictions have that we don't have. In some jurisdictions a unanimous vote is required in order to pass certain pieces of legislation . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That I can, for example, Elijah Harper held up the entire Meech Lake process and held up the entire country of Canada by using his one vote in Manitoba. Now, my friend, is that the kind of example you wanted?

Now if you want to talk about taking away rules in the middle of a ball game, let's talk about putting some other rules back into place that make the ball game fair. All right let's talk about putting back the things that should be there and let's talk about putting the rules into place at a time when they should be put into place and that's before the game is played. You don't change the rules in the middle of the ball game or you're not going to have very much fun playing with the opposition.

Now Mr. Harper, Mr. Harper may have done more than he has ever realized in pointing out to people in this country, the need for oppositions to be able to hold up governments and to be able to bring about a time of cooling off in society. That's, Mr. Speaker, what bell-ringing has become all about in Saskatchewan. I didn't make the rules. I learned to live by them and if you want to change them, that's fine. We'll work at that in the time when it should be done.

We came to this Assembly elected as an opposition with certain rules that we were told we could use. The fact that bell-ringing is not used any place else was not ever a consideration. It is one of our rules in our Assembly and we as an opposition took those rules and applied them as best we could to do the job that we are elected to do, and our job is important. As your job was important when you government members were also in opposition.

It is absolutely essential for oppositions to have powers and it is also essential that governments have opposition, so much essential in fact that in those jurisdictions where there has been a total vote in favour of one party and there

are no members left in other parties to sustain a reasonable opposition, the governments in our country actually appoint members from their own side to go and sit in the opposition side of the House in their legislatures to think up things that could be wrong or should be considered. They form their own opposition to themselves because that's how important it is. They know and they understand that you cannot have a democracy without good opposition.

Now let's go on, Mr. Speaker, to the second paragraph of this second report. The second recommendation is for a new procedure to provide a period of three sitting days during which consideration of a government public Bill might be postponed. Now that, if the rules were all encompassing and changed in the proper time frame, might be an acceptable exchange to the present situation. But that can only work if you replace what you're removing with something else that oppositions can use to effectively perform their duties.

(2100)

It goes on say, Mr. Speaker, that:

The purpose of suspending a Bill would be to allow members an opportunity to further study the Bill . . .

An Hon. Member: — Good idea.

Mr. Goohsen: — And it certainly is important. The government member voices his opinion that that is a good idea and I'm glad that he agrees.

Sometimes Bills do need to be studied. And perhaps when my colleague from Souris-Cannington mentioned a few minutes ago that Bills should be presented to the opposition a little ahead, maybe that wasn't such a bad idea, even though they seemed rather amused by the whole idea.

It seems to me that if you want to have good government and you want to have good Bills that help people, you must also be willing to suffer the scrutinies of examination. If you are intent as a government to ram legislation through without people having an opportunity to examine and study it, it must tell you one thing and that is that the government fears what will be said about what it is trying to do.

If you are so afraid, so afraid as a government to let the people know what you're going to do, then it cannot be in the best interests of the people to have that kind of legislation or that kind of government.

You have a powerful majority: 56 to 10; anything you want as a government you will eventually have. But you must, in order to provide good government, do it in the framework of the rules that allow an opposition and the people an opportunity to absorb the changes that you are making in society.

If you don't do that, I am going to lecture you just a little. You will lose the next election. And I think that is clearly obvious at this point. People will not tolerate the

approach that you people take to government. You are not operating as a democratic structure. You've got four years to put your legislation into place. You don't have to ram it down people's throat tomorrow morning.

If bell-ringing can assist you to become a good government, then you should be quite happy to have it. And if you are intent on changing the rules, then you should be willing, in order to get re-elected next time, to allow new structures for the opposition so that they in fact can do their job effectively enough so that you can get re-elected.

The second report goes on to say:

The purpose of suspending a Bill would be to allow members an opportunity to further study the Bill, consider comments made in debate, and to review public reaction.

And that is necessary.

But in all fairness, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that in Saskatchewan that we have the ability to communicate well enough and fast enough for people to be able to absorb in three days what might totally and completely change their lives. I know that we live in the modern age of television and radio, but the reality is that a lot of folks go on holidays for a week. The reality is that over in our area a lot of people may be away from home for three days just going across to Medicine Hat to do some shopping.

And if you're going to be fair about this idea of exchanging the extended bell-ringing to three days and justifying that because we need the time to let the folks know, then surely you must consider whether or not that is the right amount of time. That in itself could be a topic of some considerable debate. That's why it's so important that you folks should have considered bringing this Assembly together last January. It's why it was so important that you should have sat down and negotiated through this very committee a lot more depth and a lot more length into the areas of the changes that you were thinking you were going to have to have.

But of course you didn't know at that time that you were going to need these changes. In fact it was the furthest thing from your mind. You didn't know that your Minister of Agriculture was going to put you into a corner that you couldn't get out. You didn't know that your Minister of Agriculture was going to throw away 200 millions of dollars of federal money that could have come into this province. You didn't know that you were going to be so cornered that you would have to change the rules in order to save your government; the millions of dollars that you threw away because of bad decisions.

Mr. Speaker, it is quite evident that the decision to change the rules in the middle of the game came only as a result of the total realization by this administration that they were going to lose a battle in the courts and they had to tamper with the evidence in order to win. And they cannot win until they force a piece of legislation through this Assembly, a piece of legislation that cannot be forced through if the rules are applied equally for this opposition

as they were for the past opposition.

It was mentioned earlier by one of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, that last year this very Assembly was held up for 17 days in a debate on an energy Bill, 1989, a couple of years back. One of my colleagues has assisted me with the date of April 21.

And this piece of legislation that they oppose, was it so important at that time, Mr. Speaker, to spend 17 days to make their point? Who am I to judge that? Obviously the people that did that action thought they were doing what they thought was right and they were using the rules that had been supplied to them as available for them to use. They thought they were doing the right thing for the province and they thought that they were doing the right thing philosophically for their party. Because as you will recall, Mr. Speaker, they rang the bells as a tool to point out to the province the differences between privately owned companies and publicly owned corporations.

The NDP, by their philosophy, believe that publicly owned corporations run by the government work best for the interests of the people. And they were prepared to stake their political careers, their political ammunition and use every rule available to them to prove their point that in fact SaskEnergy should stay as a Crown corporation and not be sold to the people of Saskatchewan through a share offering.

It will always be I suppose a contentious issue of debate, Mr. Speaker, whether those two philosophies . . . one is right and the other is wrong. All we can do is allow time to judge that and to allow people the opportunity to see how things work out.

Saskoil, you will recall, Mr. Speaker, runs quite efficiently as a privately owned company with the government only owning a small number of shares. Before it was . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I don't have the information. One of the members wants to know how many shares. But I am quite sure that your Minister of Energy and Mines could look that up for you. I am very sure he could. In fact, I will ask him when the appropriate time comes if he will supply that in estimates for you.

Mr. Speaker, to get back to the subject of the bell-ringing and away from the comments made by the member opposite, we have to note that this tool was used by the government when they were in opposition. They used that tool to attempt to convince the people of Saskatchewan that they were enough right to be elected as a government. They used that tool to bring public attention to their philosophy and to their direction, and to their ability to work as an effective opposition. Thus they hoped, I'm quite sure, to prove to the people of Saskatchewan that they would be a good government. Unfortunately, the two do not happen to go together today.

Now I want to go on and deal with this exact second report because I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that the folks in the province have an opportunity to absorb this sentence by sentence, and to consider the ramifications that are involved. Earlier today it was suggested that we had not reviewed enough or sufficiently, that we perhaps

hadn't gotten enough public reaction. The reality, sir, is that we did considerable discussion with people. We did a considerable amount of travelling, and the reality is rather strange.

When we were campaigning last fall and we discussed bell-ringing at some length . . . because of course the Assembly in this province had been rather laid to shambles last year and the year before because of the use of rules, and so the bell-ringing issue was an issue in the campaign as I went around my constituency. In all honesty, Mr. Speaker, a lot of folks did express that they felt that bell-ringing was being used excessively, and that people weren't working hard enough at the actual working of the Assembly. And they made no bones about letting me know their feelings at that time.

It is ironic though, that I go back to those very same people after we get into the discussion on the GRIP Bill, and we ring the bells for some time, and went to the country to discuss it with the folks, and the very same folks that had told me during last fall's election that they thought bell-ringing was being used excessively, told me that we should now use this tool to slow the government down. They favoured ringing the bells.

I had such extremes as this, believe it or not, such extremes as this. Some of those folks said ring the bells till Christmas. One individual actually said ring the bells for three and a half years, and then they can't wreck the rest of the province before the next election. I guess they've determined when the next election's going to be.

Now we haven't said, Mr. Speaker, that we are totally opposed to the consideration of changes of rules. At least, I personally will say that for myself. I don't want to speak for all of my colleagues out of turn. They can speak for themselves as we go. I haven't ever thought that bell-ringing in itself was a tool that was absolute. Nothing is in our world. But you have to exchange it for something else. If you want to preserve the democracy that we live in, in the way that we understand it and the way that people enjoy having it, then you will have to exchange us some other rules to work with. And this is not the time, Mr. Speaker, to be negotiating those kinds of changes.

And while this debate will be productive in establishing the thoughts of the people opposite versus our own, and while I'm sure that some of the folks might say the heckling that's going on at the moment is out of character, unnecessary, disruptive, and unproductive, it in fact, Mr. Speaker, probably has some benefit because we can find out what their true feelings are.

After all, sometimes people say and express themselves through their actions exactly what they are feeling and thinking. And it's interesting to watch how heckling can sort of clue you in on what's going on in the minds of the folks opposite. And I'm sure the people of Saskatchewan will pick that up and in the long run it will all come together to better assist us to having a better democracy and a better control of a government that has gone drunk with power.

Absolute power corrupts absolutely. One of my daughters mentioned that and it just struck my mind, isn't

this ever an ironic situation that a week, not more than a week ago, I was presented with that very statement by one of my daughters. And here we have today, less than a week later, a government that is attempting to seize absolute power, but not with fear of becoming absolutely corrupt because it's too late for that. This government is absolutely corrupt already. They are absolutely corrupt and drunk with power.

(2115)

They believe that they will simply take away all of the rules that apply to giving the opposition the tools to work with in this Assembly, and then they will have their private little dictatorship which will afford them some rather unique kinds of graces. They will come in here, Mr. Speaker, on January 15 after they've had a nice, long Christmas holiday and they will sit for a week, pass all of the 64-or-some-odd Bills if they happen to want as many as we've already got on the order paper here in this Assembly through this sitting.

They will pass them all in a week's time. They will pass their budget in three days or six days, whatever the limits are. And I should imagine within two weeks they'll be all done and they can have a 10-month paid holiday on the backs of the taxpayers and nobody'll have to do any work at all to earn their wages as a member of this Assembly or as an MLA. I guess that's what absolute power could do for you, and I suppose if I was in government I might think, in my mind, that this would be a pretty nice kind of show to have. We could all go out for a 10-month holiday, take it easy, come back, sit for two weeks, ram everything through, then take off and have another holiday on the taxpayers.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's quite right. I don't think it's quite fair. In fact, I think if this Assembly is forced to give up the rules that allow the opposition to work, then those members opposite should all take 10 months of their pay and donate it to a charity because they're not going to be earning it sitting out in the country fishing. I expect some of them don't fish, Mr. Speaker. I hear a few folks complaining. Well whatever you do for fun is fine with me, but don't take it out of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan and out of their backs if you're just going to be bumming around taking it easy.

Now it goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, that:

Your Committee recommends the following amendments to the Rules and Procedures and further recommends that the said Rules take effect on the date this report is concurred in by the Assembly:

Now, Mr. Speaker, is there any doubt that this Assembly would vote this in, with a majority of 56 to 10? Hardly. But I suppose it had to be in there to make it legal. In the past though, Mr. Speaker, in all fairness, I believe, and I guess maybe I could be wrong here so I'll be corrected if I turn out to be wrong, but my impression is that in the past, when committees sat to make rule changes to the Assembly's rules, it was only done through a gentlemen's agreement, through a gentlemen's agreement with unanimous consent. But of course when I mentioned that

earlier today to someone, they said these people are no gentlemen, why would they follow any kind of gentlemen's agreements?

Well, Mr. Speaker, our system cannot work, as it has in the past, if we don't honour time-tested traditions. If we don't honour contracts our society will fall apart. You know I didn't make those words up myself. I paraphrased the fellow that these gentlemen like to dig up every so often to make their point. Those words, in essence, were said by Tommy Douglas in this very same Assembly many, many years ago. He stood here and told people that contracts are absolutely essential for society and if you don't live by contracts, society will fall apart, is what the man was saying. You have to have rules that you abide by.

If bell-ringing as a rule is going to be taken away in the middle of this Assembly's sitting, you are breaking a fundamental contract with the people of this province and with this opposition. Those rules are written as a contract. And breaking these rules in the middle of our session is the breaking of a contract. No different than the breaking of the contract with the farmers when they say that they're going to retroactively declare that letters were sent out on March 15 when in fact everyone in the province knows that no such thing ever happened. It is as much a broken contract on that front as it is on this front and they all become one, and you cannot have a democratic society where people do not honour contracts.

I challenge you people to look up your own favourite person's comments, one Tommy Douglas, who believed in contracts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say in this second report, that the rules and procedures of the Legislative Assembly be amended by adding the following after rule 36(1) length of division bells; 36.2(1):

When the Speaker has put the question on a motion and a recorded division is requested under rule 36, the bells to call in the members shall be sounded for not more than 30 minutes.

If, Mr. Speaker, this rule change were being put into a package of rule changes in January, before the Assembly sat, that might be enough time. I'm sure there will be some folks that would say, no that's not really quite good enough, we probably should have an hour, because maybe somebody gets caught with his suit jacket out at the cleaners and can't come into this very Assembly until he can take one off of one of the pages or somebody else.

I just have to point out to you, Mr. Speaker, that we do have rules. Small, little rules like wearing a jacket to this Assembly. And we adhere to that rule, don't we? It's an unwritten contract. I expect it's written in the rules as an official written contract. But here is what we do — we put on a jacket because we believe in the time tested traditions of this very Assembly, a tradition that no member as an MLA will hold his seat unless he is respectably attired. That is a rule that we all comply with quite cheerfully. We wear a tie, we wear a jacket. I would just as soon have not worn this jacket tonight, but the

reality is that it is a rule, it's a contract, just the same as bell-ringing is a rule in an unwritten contract that we use as an opposition as a tool. And you are taking away the rules in the middle of an Assembly sitting and that's not right.

We have a committee, Mr. Speaker, that is going to send a second report to this Assembly and when I read it, it sounds so very official, especially when you say that the committee has sat, considered this, written it up and presented it to this Assembly. That sends a subliminal message to folks that it must have been agreed to.

Well for the public out there who don't know how committees work, let me point out for them that there are seven people on that committee who belong to the government side, there are two members in that committee who come from the opposition side. The vice-chairman of that committee is one of the opposition members and he absolutely assures me, Mr. Speaker, that he voted against this measure. There's one other member and that is the member of the Liberal Party, the independent member. So you have three potential votes against the government seven. Is there any possibility that anything they wanted to ram down your throat would come to this Assembly? Absolutely no question whatsoever.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that they can force a change on anyone and could have done this for time immemorial since 1922 or any time in-between, because the same gentlemen's agreements were the only thing that held this Assembly together. And that gentlemen's agreement today is broken for the very first time in the history of this province, the gentlemen's agreement that has held committees together in rule changes is being broken and challenged. We are setting a dangerous, dangerous precedent for democracy here.

The thing goes on to say:

(2) Notwithstanding sub-rule (1), where a recorded division is requested in the following cases, the division bells shall sound for not more than ten minutes:

Where a recorded division is requested — now suppose somebody happens to be in the bathroom. I guess somebody's going to argue that for a while too, that maybe it could take 20 minutes.

But, Mr. Speaker, in all fairness, if this rule change were brought in to us in January or February when this Assembly was not sitting and we were to be allowed to consider it along with a package, we might not totally agree, but at least we would give it consideration as part of a package. We have not been accused of being unreasonable opposition members in this committee before. I have heard no one in this Assembly ever accuse our representatives on this committee of being unfair, of being obstructionist, of being unwilling to negotiate. I have never heard anyone from either side of this House accuse the members of opposition of doing any of those things in committee.

And yet this committee has worked for many, many years

on a gentlemen's agreement. That gentlemen's agreement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, being quite simply that people would unanimously agree before rule changes in the Assembly were made. It's not a Bill to tax somebody 10 per cent more on their income tax that we're talking about here.

We're talking about the rules of this Assembly and how it works. It's totally different. You have to use the time-tested tradition of gentlemen's agreement — a contract between fellows and ladies who come together and decide what would be best in the interests of democracy to make the system work.

We have had some rule changes. All of you heard earlier today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about a few of them — the members' statements, where fellows like myself who might not ordinarily have an opportunity to speak can stand up and talk about things like Hootinanny in the Hills out in Cypress Park. And that's important because a member's statement is the only way that some of these members, especially on the government side, it's the only rule that's been changed that allows them an opportunity to speak to the public of Saskatchewan. In a House that has 56 people voting on one side and 10 on the other, it is by nature of this very Assembly that some of the back-benchers on the government side will have no opportunity to speak.

And so that rule change was a good one. We like it. If it isn't abused we will continue to like it. There's always that possibility that people may start to make a mockery of it, use it for partisan political reasons or something like that. But as it has been working, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a good tool and a good rule change for people who ordinarily don't have a chance to address the public of Saskatchewan to view and express their views to the public of this province.

And so that was a good rule change. And our members supported putting that rule change in as a trial period. And I applaud them for doing that. It was a good move and it was done unanimously as all of the rule changes have always done before — always been done that way before until this very day.

A new course we set this province on. A new course that won't end the world but in small terms it is a disastrous course. We aren't going to upset the apple cart with this change in terms of world war. We aren't going to have a revolution likely, but changes like this in history, Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly have caused those things to happen.

The members earlier heard my colleague refer to Joseph Stalin and they laughed and hee-hawed and belly-laughed about that. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Joseph Stalin started out as what was considered in my history book, if you will recall, a somewhat moderate individual.

But absolute power corrupts absolutely. And the man began to seize power step by step, little by little, until he destroyed his country to the point that 30 years after his death they take everything and tear it down that even resembles the man. Because they absolutely now believe

that he was totally corrupt, and they believe that and they know it and they want to wash their hands of the whole thing.

(2130)

Earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talked about changing the rules on the bell-ringing as being Draconian — and maybe that's too harsh a word. But in a small way in a small province in Saskatchewan in the middle of a country that's enjoyed democracy, even though as I said before we're not going to cause a world war by this, we are fundamentally changing something that in another example that my friend referred to, changed the history of the world. These folks thought it was great hilarity to be compared with the things that Adolph Hitler did.

Well let me point out to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that individual was a socialist in a socialist party before he seized absolute power and became absolutely corrupt. And it was no laughing matter and this won't be any laughing matter to you folks when in three and a half years you find yourselves sitting over here with no tools and no rules as an opposition to work with.

Because this can come back to haunt you. Just as surely as it is bad for us, it will be bad for opposition people in this province in the future unless we put together a package where rule changes are made that provide the opposition with other tools to be used to cool down a government.

People have been phoning me, begging me to ring the bells on many issues, but we haven't done that. We haven't done that. We have used a responsible approach to using this tool.

Now I want to just finish before I go into that aspect of it. I guess I've got a long time to discuss this with you yet, so not being pressed for time and having nowhere better to go, I'll just finish off with my analysis of the second report before I go into how the opposition has been credible in its use of the rules and the tools available to it.

It goes on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to say:

Notwithstanding sub-rule (1), where a recorded division is requested in the following cases, the division bells shall sound for not more than 10 minutes:

And then it goes to:

(i) on a non-debatable motion;

Well if a motion is non-debatable, and the folks are all here, I expect that's probably the way it will end up being, if it's done at the proper time and the proper place.

(ii) on a motion moved without notice;

Now I wonder about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in all fairness. On a motion moved without notice. Now if nobody knows about it, and a motion is moved, and you say you've all got to be back here in 10 minutes, is that really good democracy. Think about that. You're going to put in some goofy notion, maybe, that somebody dreamt

up, somebody maybe has a hallucination and puts it on paper, moves without notice, moves a motion in this Assembly, and the bells can only ring for 10 minutes to call people in to vote that down.

Well, my friend, I'm quite sure that if you're on the government side, and we're over here, and you're voting on something that you've introduced, that would go quite nicely. But I have my suspicions that if it were our motion and you didn't like it, and if we happen to have a few by-elections, and our numbers happen to get a little closer to yours, and your sitting there with 14 members and we have 15, then you won't like it so good if one of your guys can't get back here in time. The shoe will be on your other foot then, my friend. It also goes on then:

(iii) in Committee of the Whole or Committee of Finance;

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, wouldn't the Minister of Finance just love to be able to pop his budget measures through with a 10-minute limit on bell

-ringing. We could double the income tax in one fell swoop. We might just decide to put the sales tax up to 12 per cent instead of 7 or 8. We might just slap that right through. And we won't even have a murmur because the news media won't have time to record it and we'll be charging the tax before anybody wakes up. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why oppositions have to have tools. Why we have to have rules like bell-ringing or something in exchange for that. It's in order to let the people know what's going on in this Assembly before, in fact, it destroys their lives.

And there's never been a government more capable of destroying more people in a shorter period of time than this one. Never in the history of this province have we run such a high risk.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the report goes on, and it says:

and further:

That the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly* be amended by adding the following after rule 55:

And here, I guess, is rule 55.1(1):

Proceedings on a public Bill introduced by a minister shall, at the request of the official opposition, be suspended for a period of three sitting days following the first reading either before or during second reading debate or during committee stage. Such request can be made only once during consideration of any Bill and shall be made orally by the member standing in his or her place.

Now the problem there of course being that if you're going to really examine this and what it's going to do to opposition and to our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it says that you can only do this once.

Supposing, for example, that a very controversial Bill comes in and on first reading the opposition says, we better pull this thing for three days to consider it. And they

do that; that'll be the rule. And we all consider it. We come back and the government decides to put in an amendment and the amendment makes it even worse than it was before. What tool now is available to the opposition to make its point to the public? Because we've already sat once with the bells ringing for three days to study it. And they could ram anything they want through.

So in effect what you do is you very coldly and callously calculate as a government how you can design a Bill that will irritate the opposition just enough to get them to walk out, and invoke this rule of three days, but not so bad as to get the whole general public upset too much. Then in three days you're back. The media hasn't given you too much trouble with it because it doesn't look too bad. But then you stick in your amendments that change the thing whatever way you want it, and the opposition's hands are tied and there is no vehicle left except to filibuster.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not saying that this rule would be totally without merit, if we didn't take some time here maybe to re-examine it, if we didn't have in it that particular restriction, if we worked on it in committee.

I believe that there's a lot of potential in this document. But it's not perfect and it's not quite right. And if you force it through as it is now, if you think the GRIP situation was a mess — all summer long and all spring — if you think that's a mess, think about what this is going to do as we try to work our way through it in committee to straighten out the mess that it's in, where people supposedly are supposed to have a gentleman's agreement to agree on things.

Nobody will ever agree on anything, because you started out with a flawed document that nobody agreed to. So how are you going to change it and have agreement? How are you going to fix it later and make it workable? How are you going to do that with unanimous consent if you start it out with people that don't consent? It's absolutely impossible. It will never happen. The decorum of this Assembly is at stake and it will be destroyed by this kind of measure. That's why precedents are dangerous.

And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is why people in our court system use precedents so very cautiously to make sure that they don't upset the democracy that we live in and the public responsibility that we have.

Just as judges have a responsibility, we as sitting MLAs have responsibilities. We all have responsibilities to see to it that our democracy works; to see to it that we preserve the very fundamental things that our forefathers fought two world wars to preserve. It is a fact that democracy was at stake. And it must have been very important for people to go out and die for.

I can't imagine any issue in this Assembly that we've talked about that I would be willing to walk over there and have somebody take a shot at me for. Not one issue is that important. And yet my forefathers and my relatives went across an ocean with a lot of discomfort to be shot to preserve something that we have the potential to destroy here. They were willing to die to preserve democracy and those things that democracy can bring us. The freedom of

the individual to express his opinions — that's what democracy's about, the right, the right to be treated fairly and equitably, the right to be able to work or not to work, to choose.

Those things are important enough for people to have laid down their lives for and yet the government of this province would take away the very fundamental rules that allow an opposition to make sure that a government works in the democratic interests of society.

It is interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that one of the members across the way has suggested that we should be working on the work of the Assembly. Well, my friend, we didn't bring this document to this Assembly; you did. This day could have been spent in private members' debate as it should have been. And in reality this night we could have been talking about some of your Bills, because I understand there were some negotiations before you decided to bring this mess in. So there were some negotiations to work into some extended hours to get through some of the legislation, to do the debating that is necessary for that to happen. Those negotiations were set and we had no objection to that, but no, here we are defending the democratic rights of our society instead of handling the business of this Assembly. That's your choosing, not ours.

You chose to bring this piece of legislation in this report into this Assembly and we have to defend it as an opposition. You chose what we would work at today, and the people of Saskatchewan should know that this opposition was quite willing to follow the ordinary rules of the day.

I believe I have a copy of the blues here. The folks out in the province may not all know what a copy of the blues is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is a piece of paper that is printed on blue paper and the rules of what we're going to do for the day are printed in a suggested form of what we have to deal with. We then get what is called the whites. The whites are a piece of paper that actually take from the blues those things that we are going to discuss for the day and the order.

Then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have the gall to sit there and say that we are unwilling to work on their agenda. Instead of following their own papers that they put out this very morning, at the last minute they bring this thing in and force us into nothing else but a defence of the democracy of our country, instead of doing the work that they say we are unwilling to do.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are willing to work. If you want to call this charade off, we'll go right to question period right now, because I've got a lot of questions that I'd like to ask the Minister of Highways about which road he's going to tear up in this province. I've been getting a lot of calls about that. I'd like to have the right to get into question period and talk to you about that. They want to know those answers.

They don't want me wasting the province's time and the taxpayers' money defending the basic fundamentals of democracy. They want me to be doing the work of this Assembly, but you people won't allow us to do that. We

can't ask you if you're going to tear up the highway out south of Val Marie or if that one can be saved.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we're going to allow the rules of bell-ringing to be taken away from us we're going to have to do it with an extreme struggle and we cannot succumb to the pressures of the government members opposite accusing us of wasting their time when in fact it was them that are wasting our time. We didn't want to talk about the rule on bell-ringing. We wanted to go to question period.

And I wanted to talk about the member's statement. The Hootinanny in the Hills is coming up and let folks know that it's coming so they could all get ready and go out there. But I didn't get a chance to do that today because there is no opportunity for a private members to get up and talk about the funnest thing that's ever happened out in the hills in Saskatchewan. Second biggest country and western jamboree. One of the members doesn't know what's going on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so it's the second biggest country and western jamboree in Saskatchewan every year, and I wanted to tell the people about that this morning, right after dinner when we come to work. But no, you have to bring in a second report here that changes the rules in the middle of the Assembly, the middle of this sitting.

(2145)

And we find ourselves having to defend the fundamental, democratic principles of this province instead of talking about who's tearing up the roads. And where's the Minister of Rural Development on some of the issues that are going on in rural municipalities out in the country? We can't talk to him about the letter he sent out today saying that we've got now a 24th of July deadline for signing-off of GRIP or signing-up. Oh, another deadline that he extended today. You didn't even know about that. Well, for your information, the deadline's been extended again. We wanted to ask him about that today. We wanted to get into the business of the province and talk about it. There's no use me asking now because he can't answer. I'm the one on the floor and I stay here.

He can get this Assembly back to work tomorrow by pulling this rag off the Table. He can pull this rag off the Table tomorrow and go back to question period and an ordinary order of work in this Assembly, the way it should have been this morning right from the start when they started off with the blues suggesting that that's in fact what we were going to do.

We were going to have an ordinary day's work to earn our pay as MLAs. And instead of that, we stand here all day trying to convince the people that you are taking away the rules of this opposition, the tools that they work with in order to keep a government from becoming a dictatorship. That was your choice, not ours. You brought this in. So don't tell me we're not working. Don't tell me that we're not doing our part. We're quite willing to go back to work. Like I said, if you want to have question period we can start now. I've got a ton of them.

I wanted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to talk about a lot of other things besides this Bill, and the member opposite

continues to want to discuss this, so I'll tell him what we wanted to work on if he's so curious. I wanted to know whether or not the Minister of Rural Development was going to force municipalities to take back the highways that they take the hard surface off of and turn back to gravel. That's what I wanted to know for the people of Saskatchewan because the municipalities are very concerned as to whether or not they will be saddled with that extra financial responsibility of taking care of all those extra roads. They wanted to know out there whether they're going to have to accept, by force, all those extra roads into their municipal systems.

It would have been important for us to get on with the business of the day rather than talking about removing the bell-ringing as a tool for the opposition. You people have chose to take up part of the month of July destroying the fundamental, democratic rights of an opposition. You people have decided to do that in the hope that most folks are off on vacation and won't notice what's going on. But maybe we will just have to talk about it long enough so that they get time to get back.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, someone mentioned earlier today that a filibuster was available to the opposition, and it is. In case there's anybody who isn't really watching too close, they may note that that's what we're doing. We're using one of the other tools that we have available to us as an opposition — it's called a filibuster. Two years ago I knew what a filibuster was, but I never thought I'd ever be in one. I never thought that I would have to use a tool of this magnitude in order to save the rule for the opposition of using a bell-ringing to bring a government to order.

Now it's obvious I'm sure, even folks in television land can probably hear the kind of commotion that we've got going on here in the House tonight, and I think it should be obvious to those folks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if the heckling can carry on like this in the House when we are simply debating the preservation of the rule, how essential it must be for an opposition to have some way of controlling that type of unruly government. If they can't even be controlled here in the Assembly, how can we control the legislation that they are proposing if we don't have some tools to work with?

The bell-ringing has been a fundamental tool of this Assembly since as long back as I can remember. I haven't studied the history of it exactly to find out if it started when this Assembly was set up in 1905, but I expect it probably was. And if it was so good for us for so long, then why would it suddenly be so bad for us that we would have to force it through in the middle of a busy working day?

I want to talk to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about a comment . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No I haven't got to my speech yet. I want to talk a little bit about a comment here that was made earlier by the Speaker himself when he referred to the fact that he was going to allow us to tie the GRIP trial and the GRIP legislation to this move to remove bell-ringing. Mr. Speaker was kind enough to point out to us that he was going to allow that and that recognition is appreciated by this opposition.

And there should be no mistake, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the minds of the people of Saskatchewan that this is not a

question just of taking away the opposition's ability to stop the government from becoming a dictatorship or stop the government from a revolution in the province. This is directly an attempt to ram through one particular Bill, the GRIP Bill. It is an attempt to change the history of our province, it is an attempt to break a contract, it is an attempt to tamper with evidence in a court trial that is before the courts, and it is tied directly to that one thing and that one thing only. This Assembly will be used and abused as a result of this action in many different ways.

I wanted to talk for a few minutes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about a comment one of the government members made about the fact that we were being irresponsible and that we might continue to be irresponsible in the use of the bell-ringing. The first speaker for the government on this subject alluded to the fact that we might sit indefinitely with the bells ringing on other issues. What he did there was directly imply that we as an opposition were not being fair to the people, that we weren't being fair to the system, that we were in fact being irresponsible.

And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a comment that cannot be left unchallenged. We have been very responsible. I mentioned earlier that other people had called me and asked me to ring the bells on other issues, and that got a chorus of laughter from the opposite side that nearly drowned my voice from the microphone. But the reality is that those people that believe that the payment of abortions and the lack of attention to the plebiscites that were voted on last fall were reason enough to ring the bells. Folks that believe in that issue so very strongly that they were willing to stand on the Assembly grounds out here in protest against what was going on, those people thought that their issue was the issue that was important enough to ring the bells for more than 18 days, I can assure you.

Now this opposition chose not to go that distance on that issue because we felt we had to show some responsibility on how we use the tools available to us. You want to talk about people who want to ring the bells. We have had a whole list of things that we could have rung the bells on. Mr. Deputy Speaker, just to prove the point that we have been more than co-operative, I'll just go through some of these examples.

Bill No. 20 for an example. I just opened the book up. Let's talk about it. It just happens to be the one that I hit. Here it is — The Surface Rights Acquisition and Compensation Act. This opposition saw no reason not to allow that piece of legislation to pass through the normals channels of this governmental structure that we're in. It is now in committee to be discussed. First and second readings are already passed. And you would say, well that's just housekeeping. It doesn't matter. But I had an individual tell me that this Bill is important enough to ring the bells on. Believe it or not I just opened the book and that's the one.

And the reason, I'll tell you the reason: because in this legislation there is a small piece in there that is very upsetting to that individual. And in this legislation it says that the fees will be increased from \$2 to \$5 for each photocopy that anyone gets from the Surface Rights Acquisition and Compensation Board.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that individual stated to me that while most people will think going to \$5 for a charge for a photocopy of transcripts of past hearings is not very important, it means a difference of between \$500 to \$2,000 . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I've listened to the member with interest and his use of examples but I encourage him to think of them as examples and not to dwell on the details of his examples and in this particular case the details of Bills which members have had an opportunity to discuss before the House. So I encourage the member to stay on the motion that's before us.

Mr. Goohsen: — Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think I made my point, and I appreciate the fact that the point has been made that we could have, in fact, been unco-operative. We could have taken the advice of that individual and rang the bells. But we were responsible enough not to do that.

We followed the order and procedures and the other tools available to us to point out the things that were wrong about this Bill and how it restricts farmers without very much money from being able to try their cases before a court of law in this province because it will financially be impossible in the future for them to do that.

That issue was important enough, Mr. Speaker, it was important enough for that individual to ask me if we would consider ringing the bells. He didn't say for 18 or 20 days. But he thought maybe for a couple of days.

Now you take away the right of the opposition to use this tool and you're taking away what a lot of people have been asking us to do. But we have, contrary to the opinions of the first speaker of the government tonight, contrary to his opinions, we have used considerable restraint and considerable amount of good judgement, I believe, in not abusing the use of this tool of ringing the bells.

There are, I think, 64 Bills in this book, Mr. Speaker, 66 already it is. Two of them have not been put in because they came through today. Sixty-six Bills, Mr. Speaker. Out of those 66, we've rang the bells on one. And this government has the nerve to say that we are abusing a tool that oppositions have had in this province for as long back as anybody can remember.

We used a tool that they themselves used in the past, and they say that we are irresponsible for using it once out of 66 times. That in my opinion is irresponsible, to make a statement like that. Because it has not been an abuse by opposition.

We have used an enormous amount of constraint, especially when you consider that there are people in our party who genuinely would like to have us take a course of revenge. And we said no, we will not do that. We won't use the tools of this Assembly for revenge on the NDP. We will use the tool correctly at the proper time to save the democratic principles of our province and to save the people in rural Saskatchewan from legislation that could destroy their life . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I don't

claim, as one member has chided into the conversation here, I don't claim to be trying to save the province by myself. But I am getting paid a wage to do a job and I will do my part. It may end up being a very small part. It may be insignificant. And in fact, in the end, Mr. Speaker, it could end up that it's a total waste of my time. But I'm being paid for it. I'm being paid for it, rather handsomely, and I'm quite prepared to stand here to do the job.

We could have, Mr. Speaker, moved to orders of the day today, but we find ourselves facing a government that would likely laugh in Tiananmen Square as the people there died to try to gain the same democracy that we have cherished in this province and in this country. They probably would have had a great, amusing time watching those fellows fight for their democracy as they died in the streets.

(2200)

Well, Mr. Speaker, we are duty-bound to see to it that if the rules are changed, that oppositions in this opposition period and in future oppositions will have tools left to work with.

And there is another tool that you folks might consider. And that is a free vote. I haven't seen any free votes in this Assembly yet. You could put that rule into effect and allow it to happen. Some assemblies in fact do exactly that.

The member from Regina Churchill Downs stated that there was irresponsibility because he thought we might use this rule again. Well, Mr. Speaker, somebody earlier today said that at some time in your life you have to draw a line in the sand. I think we all know that that is a metaphorical term for saying that we have to stand on a position at some time and that we have to put our backs to the wall and fight with whatever we have for whatever it takes to defend some principle that we believe in.

We also heard mention that the bells don't ring in Ottawa and somebody else stated that they have different rules for the opposition and they also have a senate to fall back on. It's the only argument I've heard that makes me reconsider my thoughts about what should happen to senates. They may have a purpose after all. Although it's hard to see where they are most times.

Earlier today it was alluded, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that somehow the weight of the scales of justice would have to be balanced with enough public opinion, suggested at least, that enough public opinion would have to be on this side in order for us to balance that scale so that we could go on with wanting to preserve the rights of the opposition in this bell-ringing debate and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I think that the scales of justice are just about balanced in the centre on this issue right now.

The folks in the country used to be against bell-ringing but gradually they're changing their minds, and while a large percentage could have been read a few months back as being opposed, if you were to take an honest look at a survey of the people now, it would be pretty well balanced. It won't be very long that the people of this province will realize what in fact is at stake in their

democracy if the opposition is no longer able to be effective. And that will balance the scales of justice to our side. And of course it will go to the right side.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious to everyone in this province that if we had been closer to an election, this opposition would not have had to go to the extremes that it did in the bell-ringing over the issue that was at stake when we did that. The reality is that we are a long ways from an election and this issue will perhaps not even be considered in the next election.

But the reality is also this: that a government that does not have anything at stake is not willing to negotiate. When you take away the need for them to negotiate a settlement they're bound not to want to negotiate. They'll simply ride it out and hope for the best. And that's what happened.

That's why it took 18 days for this issue to be resolved; that if we had been within a year of the election, would likely have been resolved with negotiation within 3 or 4 days. No question about it.

But knowing that they were far away from an election and knowing that this elimination of this tool can give them the power to jam everything through for three and a half more years, they're willing to take whatever comes — whatever comes to get it now for the benefits later.

And the same thing holds through, Mr. Speaker, when reporters on the 6 o'clock news report that the Speaker is going to bail them out. And that's unfortunate.

The Speaker: — Order. I'm sure that the member didn't mean what he said. Because if he did, he is certainly unparliamentary and that the remarks he makes against the Chair are certainly not accepted in this legislature. And I ask the member to withdraw those remarks that he made against the Chair.

Mr. Goohsen: — I certainly withdraw the remark that you feel that I said. I don't believe I said in my mind what you heard my words say. So I withdraw that and we'll carry on with the debate.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that this government is so far from an election that they really don't care what public opinion is; and it is my contention that public opinion — and I was trying to make that point — that public opinion has swayed from one extreme on one hand to the other side. It has not come to an extreme on the other side, but it will gradually because there is a building of attitude in the province of Saskatchewan that opposition does have to have a tool to keep a very powerful government under control with.

It is absolutely essential that an opposition, in order to do its job to preserve the things in democracy that we value, it is absolutely essential that oppositions have tools to work with.

And what I was suggesting is that public opinion is in fact swaying over to our side, and that if the argument is made by the government that we have to have public opinion on our side in order to achieve our goal of retaining tools

to work with, then I'm saying that we have that. I'm saying that we have done a survey; we've done a poll. That poll was conclusively evidenced in our favour to carry on.

It was surprising to me that when the poll was done that the folks in the city that did not support us in the election . . . as you're all aware basically most of the folks in the cities did not, the big cities did not support our party — but the unbelievable part for me in that poll was that the people in the cities supported what we are doing. They understand what's going on and I had underestimated them. I apologize to the people of the cities for that because I truly did underestimate them.

I didn't think they would understand what we were doing because we had tied it to a farm Bill. And the reality is that those folks are watching. They know what's going on and they're starting to see the need to support us in keeping this government under control. And they're starting to say, out loud, that we have to keep the tools of opposition so that the opposition can work. And as I've told you a minute back, we felt we had to at some time draw the line in the sand, and we had to do that today because you're taking away, in the middle of this session, the tools of opposition.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have gone through every Bill in that book if it would have made a better point. As I did pick one and made my point, I could have taken every Bill in that book and said that this opposition had not rang the bells on that Bill — 66 of them. Because the very Bill that we rang the bells on is not in that book.

So we have 66 Bills that we have chosen to allow this government to work through this Assembly in a democratic fashion, without using the tool of bell-ringing. We have been responsible. That, sir, was the point I wanted to make. We were being responsible when we took the approach that we took. We could have rang the bells on several issues.

There is no question, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP have introduced the motion to win a court case against farmers. Obviously they need to limit bell-ringing to win a case. It's unfortunate though that it won't stop there, because once this tool is lost they will be able to use this same kind of measure on all kinds of things.

Even though we are responsible and have not used the bell-ringing, the fact that we had it was a deterrent from the government doing ridiculous things. And a deterrent is important in life. Now if you don't think so, remember the last time you got a speeding ticket. Next time you probably drove a little slower. That's a deterrent.

The fact that we could use the bell-ringing on those 66 Bills is a deterrent from the government becoming too dictatorial in their approach. And so if they take the rule away to jam one piece of legislation through, then the potential for every piece of legislation in the future to be rammed through in the same fashion exists.

And that's too high a price to pay for the people of Saskatchewan for one Bill. We have decided that we're not going to let the GRIP legislation be voted on unless the retroactive clause was removed. If the bell-ringing

limiting the bells can be introduced in three days time, then, Mr. Speaker, the opposition's hands are tied. The GRIP legislation will pass and farmers will suffer. That is a given. If the bell-ringing issue is lost by this opposition without replacing other tools to work with, then the farmers will lose their case. It is a fact that reports on the judge's statement say exactly that.

Now the NDP want the people of Saskatchewan to believe bell-ringing and GRIP '92 are separate issues. They are not. This is not true. This motion will give the NDP the opportunity to ram through any legislation they desire — any legislation that suits their vindictive needs. Bell-ringing was to be discussed in a co-operative manner during the Rules and Procedures Committee meeting. Instead I'm told that the chairman came to the meeting with prepared reports. I wasn't there, but that's the report I got.

The opposition, I'm told, was ignored. The opposition never had the opportunity to put forward any suggestions for consideration. That's the kind of gentlemen's agreement that doesn't exist any more. We believe that the chairman of that committee knew what would happen. We believe . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I would just like to ask members that . . . It's very difficult for the Speaker to rule on this particular situation, because the Speaker automatically, as Speaker, is chairman of that committee. And there's no opportunity for the Speaker to defend himself in this legislature. And accusations that are made against the chairman, which in this particular case happens to be the Speaker, is really unfair and should be out of order. It's very difficult for the Speaker to rule on that. But I would ask the members to please take that into consideration when you're making accusation against the chairman of that committee when that chairman happens to be the Speaker at the same time.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite, I believe, should be ashamed for putting the chairman of that committee into such an embarrassing position — ashamed of themselves. Because our members on that committee have obviously gone in with every intention of discussing rule changes and these other members, seven of them outnumbering the other three, won't negotiate. And they do put the chairman in an embarrassing position, and that is absolutely wrong. It should not be happening.

Now we've talked, Mr. Speaker, about things like other tools that we have available. We've talked about using a filibuster and talking about things. I guess it's all right to use those other tools too to jar the attention of the people, but sometimes a jar isn't enough. Sometimes you have to, Mr. Speaker, get people to pay attention in another way.

In private life the old saying is: hit 'em in the pocket-book, it'll make 'em start to think. Well we don't have that tool in parliament; we can't hit the government in the pocket-book. So what works out in the society won't work here.

(2215)

That's why these gentlemen's agreements, the gentlemen agreement to have a consensus before making changes has to be the only rule that can work to change rules because there is no recourse, there is no way of forcing a government to be responsible.

I believe that the members opposite have conveniently acquired short memories. It is too bad that they can't think back to the comments that they made in 1989 when a similar motion to this one at hand was being discussed — very similar. There was a massive outcry from the NDP that their democratic rights were being trampled upon. It was agreed that the motion would be handled in an all-party committee. And as all the members in the House today know, agreement was not reached.

The government of the day did not strong arm the people. They did not force a decision. They allowed the process to continue to work. And that is where the difference comes in philosophy, because that government knew that it would be undemocratic.

Unfortunately for the people of this province that government is no longer here. And on July 7, 1992, this government forced the motion in committee and now they will attempt to force it to pass here. It was not an agreed decision. It was not an agreement in committee. It is a precedence, a precedence of change.

And the government has a fight on its hands. Because we cannot sit idly by and allow such a major change in our democratic structure to take place in the fashion in which it's being done.

The farmers in this province will be the first to be directly affected, Mr. Speaker. And that is unfortunate for them as a group of people. But all of the people of Saskatchewan will be affected. The reality is that if a government gets out of control, if they can establish the right to break contracts, to tamper with evidence, who's next? If the opposition can't ring the bells and walk out, what stops this government from bringing in labour legislation that would set minimum wage at \$10 an hour. Nothing. Not a bad idea he says. Think about it. I heard that. It came right from the government side. Not a bad idea. Ram it through. The member from Swift Current likes that idea. We just pump it through and nobody could stop us.

All right, let's take it a step further. Suppose, Mr. Speaker, the right to ring the bells is gone and there's no other tool in place. What happens next year if the government decides that everyone who could afford to buy a Saskatchewan bond this year was too rich because he could afford to buy bonds and didn't need that money to live on, and therefore we'll confiscate the money by a Bill that we'll ram through this Assembly. Well, how about if you'd say that that's too silly, you wouldn't go that far.

How about you decide that the treasury is being broke because interest rates go down to 3 per cent, instead of being at 7 where they are now. So you retroactively pass legislation changing the interest that you're going to pay on those bonds 3 or 4 per cent instead of 7. You could do it. There would be no way the opposition could stop you. And you might do it because you've proven track-record already that you're willing to break contracts

retroactively. If you'll do it to farmers, why wouldn't you do it to the folks in Regina? If you'll do it to the people in the country, what's to stop you from going the next step?

Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue. We have everybody from travel agents, to researchers, to tourist associations, to road builders, all concerned; RMs (rural municipality), all kinds of people expressing concerns that the opposition might not have enough strength to save them from the kind of disgusting actions that have been going on.

We heard this government last fall, Mr. Speaker, talk to the people of Saskatchewan about decreasing taxes, how they were going to increase services. I haven't counted the list but I think that there must be two dozen new taxes already imposed. I had a list. I should have brought it along for you. It was about four pages long of all the things that people are paying extra on.

People are very fearful, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition will not have the strength to keep this revolution back to an evolution; to keep the lid on, the way things are going. We've talked about a lot of things that could happen, Mr. Speaker, and that's necessary, because in the democratic process when something as important as the bell-ringing is going to be removed, people have a right to know what is going on.

And the only way that they're going to get that right fulfilled is if we can take enough time so that the media can get the message out to the folks. It's the only tool now that we're going to have left, is to stand here and to discuss the issue so that folks have time to take a reading on it and to understand it.

When we, Mr. Speaker, decided to use the bell-ringing the one time that we have used it in this sitting, through all of these 66 Bills, there were a number of issues on the order paper that the government should have gone to work with. They should have left this piece of paper off of the Table today and they should have gone to work on their Bills and their budget.

We should have done that because right now the chiropractic patients in this province don't know where they stand. The government has said that they're going to pass legislation changing the charging rates, and because the deadline that the government has stated was July 1, it has now come about that we're past that date and the government hasn't handled its business. And that's not our fault.

We came here prepared to work today. When we rang the bells for the 18 days, we quite clearly pointed out to this government that we would be willing to go back and deal with all of the other needs of the government if they would simply pull that Bill off of the order paper. If they would simply take that one thing out of the discussion, we could have worked for the whole 18 days.

Could we not have accomplished many things in the time that it took for this government to try to prove that they are more bull-headed than any other government that ever existed; that they're willing to sit and take whatever comes to force their will, not only on this opposition but

on the people of this province?

We could have passed the Bill allowing the government to put into place its new health care measures. We don't agree with those measures. I want that pointed out loud and clear. But we weren't prepared to ring the bells on every issue. We proved that point. We didn't like the idea that people who need chiropractic help and optometrists were going to have to now pay more. A lot of folks wrote us letters. I suspect I've got a pile that deep on my desks back there in my office yet, because I've saved them — people who need eye care, who don't like the idea that these changes are coming.

And right now, Mr. Speaker, because we're into this debate, those folks don't know if they're going to have to pay the old rate or if they're going to be charged the new rate retroactively sometime later on in July or August or September, whenever we get back to work. Is this government going to back bill all of those people, back to the July 1? Those folks are genuinely concerned. There are a lot of people out there that live on fixed incomes.

I had a lady call me the other day who is on welfare. She gets a hundred . . . or \$550 a month and it's important to her to know exactly where her money is going to have to go because any retroactive billing will put her in a position of not being able to buy her groceries.

Now I know that there's not much sympathy in the government for a lot of those people that are on those low incomes, but the reality is that those folks have to live too. And when you're going to make changes like this, and then you're going to stall your own business agenda for the mean-spirited things that you're doing here, then you're treating the people of this province very badly.

The people of this province expected more when they elected you and they deserve more. They didn't elect you to become their dictators; they elected you to become their parliamentarians. They didn't elect you to take away the rules of the opposition. They elected you to do the business of this Assembly and the business of this Assembly is not getting done.

Quite frankly, quite frankly you could have gone to the orders of the day this morning, we could have followed the blues and you could have got a day's work done. You could have done that 18 days ago and you chose not to do it. The people of this province, Mr. Speaker, are disappointed and rightly so.

I thought quite frankly, that it would take months before anybody would ever phone me about anything. After all our party had been defeated by the biggest landslide since 1982 and I thought well, the folks will call the new government but they're not. My phone is ringing all the time. I've got piles of letters. I got 408 letters to answer this week alone because the people are disappointed with what this government is doing.

And changing this bell-ringing rule in the middle of the Assembly sitting time is going to make them even more upset when they find out why it's being done and when they realize that the business of this Assembly could in fact have gone on in a normal fashion, not only for today

but also for the other 18 days that we spent ringing the bells over one issue, one farm Bill that could have been pulled. One farm Bill that could have been put on the back burner just for a little while and you could have had your budget taken care of. You wouldn't have needed interim supply. You wouldn't have needed all of those wasted days and wasted nights, must be a song like that. Isn't that the way this government goes? Wasted days and wasted nights, because they haven't the good sense to get to business. They're so determined to seize power that they're willing to let the people of this province suffer through anything while they grab it and take it. Seizing power by force. That's what this is all about.

Taking away the rules of this opposition is only the beginning. In the end it will reflect on every individual in this province. Tampering with old, time-tested, old gentlemen's agreements, the old philosophies, the old standards. Throwing away tradition, establishing precedents to create democracies into dictatorships.

That, my friends, the Saskatchewan people will remember in the next election. They will be done with you and sooner than later if you have the courage to put it to the challenge. You are finished in this province. The people will defeat you in the next election.

The Speaker: — Order. It now being 10:30 this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:30 p.m.