

EVENING SITTING

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTIONS

Special Committee on Rules and Procedures

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Shillington that the second report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures be now concurred in, and the amendment thereto moved by Mr. Britton.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was almost . . . I thought for a minute that the Minister of Rural Development was going to enter the debate. And I would sure welcome him, when I conclude my remarks, to take his place and enter the debate as well with many of the members that have done so to date, including I think there was one or two members on the government side of the House who did take the time to address the motion.

Certainly we're waiting for them to take the time as well to stand in this Assembly and speak to the amendment that was brought forward by my colleague, the member from Wilkie, an amendment which, Mr. Speaker, would indeed allow the Rules Committee to continue to work.

As I was indicating prior to the supper hour, prior to 5 o'clock, Mr. Speaker, I had a number of quotes that I had gone through and researched from the previous debate back in 1989. I found it very interesting to read some of the comments made by the member from Saskatoon South at the time, and I just want to point out again and refresh the members of those in the Assembly.

And I quote the member as he was commenting in this House and giving his reasons why the motion should be referred back to the committee and to allow the committee to operate, and speaking out on the fact that the opposition should indeed have the ability to have some form of bells, or a forum available to them to raise major concerns that they would feel at any time, regardless of who the opposition is, would be very important to the public to be aware of prior to any motion or any Bill being introduced and passed through this House.

The member from Saskatoon South said, and I quote: I may point out that obstructive tactics are allowed by the rules.

I don't know if the member, in making that quote, really felt that he was being obstructive in 1989. I believe the member that I'm quoting, and members of this Assembly, felt they were utilizing the tools that were available to them in order to raise a matter of grave concern, or a matter which they felt was of grave concern to the general public and to the people of Saskatchewan at the time and of the day — exactly the same thing that we did here. Yes, it's obstructive.

And then he talks about the minister of Rural Affairs speaking out, and invites the minister of Rural Affairs to

take his place in the House and speak to the motion, suggesting that maybe the minister of Rural Affairs of that day didn't take the time to speak up in cabinet as he felt he should have.

And the reasons he suggested that the minister of Rural Affairs of the day may not have spoken up, and the minister of Urban Affairs may have not taken the time to speak out on the concerns that they felt the public were bringing to issue, was because of the number of petitions that the opposition of the day presented to the House, petitions which indicated that people, yes, were against the bell-ringing process.

But also in the period of debate that took place back in 1989, we are all aware of the fact that members on this side of the House, the former opposition, indicated that even though people who were against bell-ringing felt that bell-ringing is a necessary tool that the opposition has and must be given, to at least inform the general public and give the opposition the time guidelines and the time available to go and consult with the public regarding issues.

And he says in his quote, he continues on, he said, but did the government, did cabinet, did the minister of Rural Development listen to his constituents? Did the minister of Urban Affairs listen to their constituents? And his observation and strong feeling was, no, they didn't listen.

However, I think as I wind up my remarks a little later this evening, Mr. Speaker, that I will indicate that obviously the government of the day was listening, the government of the day was consulting. The government of the day felt that it would be important, as the opposition laid out the points that they were bringing forward, that it wouldn't be that bad at all to send the motion back to the committee, back to the special Rules Committee, and asking the committee to come up with a process for change, asking the committee to come up with ideas, asking the committee to sit down and do some consultations, such as our motion does here today.

The amendment to the motion even allows and asks the committee to hold public hearings and have the public's involvement so the public can be totally aware of what it means and what the bell-ringing question means. The fact that it isn't to be used as an obstructive tactic, but it is a means, as I indicated earlier today, to call members to vote, but also to give an opposition, a very honest and forthcoming opposition, the ability to go and talk to their constituents.

The member from Saskatoon South also went to quote a well-known Canadian, and I quote, Mr. Speaker, the member is quoting the Rt. Hon. Jeanne Sauvé, then Governor General of Canada:

She says . . . she goes on to say:

"However, (referring to the bells) their use must be regulated so as to safeguard the government's right to have the House consider its order of business, and the equally important right of the opposition to criticize, oppose, and even obstruct a

government measure (must be in place).”

And the member from Saskatoon South indicated that that was from a quote on March 18, 1982, by the then Governor General, Rt. Hon. Jeanne Sauv  :

She said it must give the opposition the right to criticize and obstruct government business if we feel within our obligation that they are not abiding by the wishes of the people of Saskatchewan.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it is imperative that even the opposition of today have the same abilities, be able to hinder government motions to the point that we can raise the concerns with the general public, with the electorate out there who will put their faith in us, and not just members on the opposition side of the House but all members of this Assembly. We are all here elected to represent them.

The member from Saskatoon South also talked about the member from Regina South, and he says:

... he wants to talk about bell-ringing, a very urgent and pressing problem.

And he brought to the member from Regina South, brought to his attention, that it appeared that the member from Regina South wasn't interested in a number of the other concerns that were taking place in the province at that time. Concerns in agriculture, concerns regarding the unemployed, the out-migration of citizens from this province, hospital waiting lists, the fact that even in 1989 the then opposition were already looking and calling for an election. And that was some two years after an election but it would appear to me many people feel the same way right now, that they really didn't get the straight bill of goods prior to the October 22 election 1991. It would be appropriate to give them a chance to exercise their right to vote and to speak out on the issues and indeed send a message to the government. I believe you would find many people out there right now, even though it's so short in a term, would feel that way.

But as we address the motion before this Assembly, I think they would also feel very strongly and they would speak out very strongly suggesting that, what's wrong with this motion being sent back to committee? Is the bell-ringing as urgent today as it was then? Would it be just as appropriate as it was in 1989 to send the motion back to committee?

The member from Saskatoon South talked about an olive branch.

I am simply saying to you, (and I quote) bring back that olive branch; (he said) let's submit this to a committee; let the committee address it; let them address other rules of this legislature, and let us then get on with the business of running this province. Let us get on with the business of doing the estimates. Let us get on with the business of addressing the problems of agriculture and of education and of unemployment ...

Mr. Speaker, this member kept bringing up the fact of

other pressing and urgent issues which he felt back in 1989 were important and it was important to move off of the bell-ringing question and for the question to go to committee. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, if it was as important then, it is just as important today to follow the same process of consensus, of negotiation, of consultation.

Mr. Speaker, the member said we should send it to committee so that:

... we can ... carry out the wishes of the people of this province. If that is not done, if that is not done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, then I think progress will not take place in this legislature.

And most of us in this Assembly were here back in '86 and '87 when some members of this Assembly talked about ... the opposition members let the people of Saskatchewan know that they would make this province ungovernable. And certainly we faced the period of time in the late '80s where there were a lot of obstructions placed before the government.

And we just have to look back to the 1991 legislative session where there were filibuster after filibuster just by presenting petitions and reading names — and in some cases fictitious names. And I believe, yes, that's a form of filibuster and it gives the opposition a form of consulting the people and getting their input. But when you see names on a petition such as Daffy Duck or Donald Duck, Mr. Speaker ... and talking about getting back to the motion and the amendment before us, we wonder if the opposition is using the tools that are before them properly.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon South indicated that this should go to committee to allow the opposition to carry out the wishes of people. And indeed the opposition of the day felt people really felt ... or felt the people were saying, we must hinder the SaskEnergy Bill, we must stop this government. We must stop the government from:

... unilaterally changing the rules and unilaterally passing privatization legislation against the wishes of Saskatchewan people.

As we stand here and as we ask that this motion be referred back to committee, we feel very strongly too that we must speak out, not only to inform the Saskatchewan public but to let the government know that just because they have a very large and overriding majority, that it doesn't give them the mandate ... they weren't given the mandate just to unilaterally make changes across this province without, as they have indicated, consulting people in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as I was perusing some of the debate that took place in 1989, I found it very interesting that there was very little said by the member from Regina Elphinstone, the then Opposition House Leader, now the current House Leader. And as we've indicated over the last period of hours and couple days, we are more than willing to move on with the business of this Assembly. And I believe that since the ruling of the Speaker in this

Assembly, calling the Assembly back to work and putting the process of rule changes in the hands of the committee, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition showed the people of Saskatchewan that they were more than willing to work.

And we just have to take a look at the number of Bills that were presented to this House over the past two weeks, prior to the introduction of the motion we are speaking to today. A number of Bills were brought to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and a number of Bills passed first reading, they passed second reading, they moved into committee, and indeed passed the Assembly. So I think the process is there for the government to work and for the opposition to work, all within the guidelines of the rules that are presently before us.

And it certainly would be very fair, I believe, and it's the argument we present is there, that we can certainly refer this back to the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures and allow the House to proceed. And I believe the member from Regina Elphinstone when he said this, and I quote, take this stupid motion out of here and we'll deal with the issues that people voted us to come here for, are appropriate today.

We don't have to be debating the motion. We don't have to be debating the amendment before this Assembly. We can get on with the estimates. We can get on with Bills. And there are many Bills in committee such as the amendment of enforcement of maintenance orders. There are Bills regarding agriculture that's before this Assembly that this Assembly can get on with.

(1915)

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the contentious motion . . . or Bill that's before this Assembly, we would also suggest and throw out that olive branch to the government indicating that all they have to do is pull out the retroactive clauses out of their Bill, bring forward all the rest of the information within the Bill that addresses the agricultural questions before us and allow the House to proceed. But don't introduce the Bill with the retroactive clause that is going to destroy the rights of farmers across this province to have their day in court.

And I think that is only fair. I believe it is only fair. I believe people right across Canada, people from Tommy Douglas's day, people from John Diefenbaker's time, and the Lester Pearson's of this world, and many of the leaders across this nation, many premiers feel very strongly that we live in a great country. We support a lot of values that, in many cases, people take for granted and we must never take away those values. We must never interfere with a person's right to speak and to defend themselves.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that there will be many other arguments presented. And I believe . . . My colleague says, we'll have a number of arguments as well to bring forward in this Assembly as to why we should vote on this amendment and we should indeed vote in favour of the amendment sending the motion back to committee.

I think of the member from Regina Rosemont and I think of the debate and his entry to the debate, and I'm going to

quote a couple of comments that he made during debate:

Mr. Speaker, that's what this debate is all about. That's what this debate is all about. There is absolutely no hesitation or doubt in my mind that that is what we are doing here tonight. We are defending the rights of citizens to participate in the democratic process, unlike the members opposite, who would deny citizens the right to participate in the democratic process.

Very interesting that the member from Regina Rosemont in '89 would consider it a democratic principle to stand and defend people's rights and freedoms and privileges. And then today I would ask the member to stand in this place and indeed defend those rights and speak on this issue, not only speaking on the bell-ringing and the government's attempt to unilaterally enforce the rules and then push rules upon the opposition, but speak to the undemocratic principles that we see in the Bill and the reason for the bells in the first place.

The member goes on and I continue. I quote:

The argument I will now make for some period of time, Mr. Speaker, is this: is that this bell-ringing, this motion to limit bell-ringing, inhibits the citizenry of Saskatchewan to participate in the affairs of their government, and that far from having bell-ringing as an anti-democratic exercise, the only anti-democratic exercise that we see here in the last several weeks has been this government's attempt to silence the opposition and inhibit citizens from participating in the democratic process.

What I find, Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Rosemont found it ideologically wrong for the government of the day to indeed introduce a motion that he felt very strongly against and felt that he should have the opportunity and the ability to speak without being hindered on behalf of his constituents and indeed on behalf of all Saskatchewan.

I quote again:

What he did, Mr. Speaker, was brought this motion forward which would limit, and I think I've outlined in rather broad terms, but also in terms which everybody in this province can understand . . . the functioning of us as members, and the functioning of the citizens of this province to engage in the democratic process.

And that is all we ask for today, Mr. Speaker. We ask for the same opportunities, the same abilities to speak, to stand up in our place to speak out on behalf of individuals, to speak out on behalf of the rights of individuals and to let people know that we may be only 10 members but we will indeed address any concern. We will bring it before this Assembly. We will make sure that the government hears about the concerns. We will make sure ministers are aware of the concerns that people have.

And certainly, as I indicated earlier today in my remarks, the Premier also, I believe, is a strong believer in the

consultative and the approach of sitting down and working together to come to consensus and to come to agreement. And the Minister of Justice is shaking his head in the affirmative and I appreciate that. I believe we've got his support. But we would just ask him to indeed exercise his abilities to influence his cabinet colleagues in going, in allowing and suggesting that we follow the same process that took place in 1989, of sending this Bill back to special committee.

Mr. Speaker, we do need public hearings, and we've heard that on numerous occasions. And I think the government's argument for the motion before us was based on the fact that they felt the public is unhappy with bell ringing. They felt the public is unhappy with the process, and no one will disagree with that. We not only need public hearings on the motion before us; we need public hearings on the Bills before us and certainly any Bills that would contain retroactively.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, we need it because it appears the ministers of the day haven't taken the time to really consult with people before bringing in legislation such as the legislation before this Assembly that has opened the door for the bell-ringing and the motion that we are now debating. We wonder where government members have been; why they haven't been really consulting and seeking people's views.

I would suggest if the only question out there is, do you believe in bell-ringing, that people would indicate, well no, of course not; I don't believe in bell-ringing. I believe if the question was posed, do you believe that a government should unilaterally change the rules without consensus, I would almost suggest that, or I beg to suggest that people would say no, that this country, this province, has operated for years, for generations, on consensus. Our communities have operated on consensus. Our health boards and our local governments have all operated on consensus.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that when people feel that their voice hasn't been heard, or when they feel that there's a strong issue, I guess one could argue, well they will have opportunity in due course to speak out on the issue at the polls. But I don't think it would be appropriate for us as opposition members to sit down right now and just say, well in four years time people are going to be able to speak to this government and just let things ride and let things roll and let the government have its way.

It is very imperative that we on this side of the House take the time, whatever time is needed, to address the concerns out there, to raise the questions in committee, to raise the questions in Committee of the Whole and Committee of Finance, to raise the questions on motions, any questions that would bring to light the process of government, where the government is going, what plan they have, what they intend to do. And as we are all aware, there are a number of concerns that are out there before committees right now.

It also would be very appropriate to send it back to committee in light of the number of committees that are working in this Assembly. And I believe the government of the day, and even suggested in opposition, that they

would form committees to address a number of questions such as the ward system, or address the SaskPower question, or SaskTel, or even in view of the Crown Life movement here to the province of Saskatchewan.

Over the time and over the decades, Mr. Speaker, governments have, when given the opportunity, have taken the time to form committees to formulate and gather public opinion and to address the concerns, the issues, and the questions they have before them.

I believe if it's important to have a committee addressing the store hour question, it would be very appropriate to indeed allow the special rules committee to have due diligence in the time to very carefully look at all the recommendations that have been put before it regarding hours, regarding speeches, regarding the closure debate, and regarding time limitations, regarding the bell-ringing.

It would be very appropriate to give that committee not only the mandate but the time to sit down and very conscientiously and concisely address the issues that we would ask, this Assembly would ask of that committee to address. Certainly the number one issue right now would be the bell-ringing, and it would be appropriate for this Assembly to give the committee some guidelines and maybe even set a time frame that wouldn't be necessarily a time frame, a period of time with a date on it that the committee could aim towards, but having a little bit of flexibility that as we see the committee starting to work cohesively and come up with some alternatives and grapple with the issues, that wouldn't put them in a box where they would be so cornered and boxed up that they wouldn't have the ability to move and appropriately address the issues.

So I believe that it is very imperative that we allow the consultative process to work. I think we have agreed to come to some sort of agreement in this regard and I believe that we should continue to allow the House leaders to sit down and continue to negotiate.

And with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, it is very imperative that we take the time in this Assembly to lay out the guidelines, lay out the reasons for us standing in this Assembly and continuing to speak on the motion so that the House leaders and, if you will, the party leaders, can do some consulting, sit down and throw out some ideas. And at the end of the day, supposedly, Mr. Speaker, we will come to a consensus that either addresses the question of bell-ringing that all can live with, that we can present to the House as a group and as a whole rather than the government unilaterally bringing it forward.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is imperative that we have that ability to speak, that we have the ability to let people know that their voice is being heard. And we are all aware of the fact that if the opposition didn't speak out and if the opposition didn't exercise their rights to speak, that many people across this province would consider the opposition as being ineffective and indeed the question would come, well why did we vote for you, or why did we send you to Regina to sit in the Legislative Assembly. Didn't we send you there to speak on our behalf? Didn't we send you there to raise the concerns and the questions that we have that we don't have the same ability as you

have? We voted for you because we believed that you had the ability and you would effectively stand up and speak on our behalf. So, Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that the opposition's credibility be paramount and protected as well.

I would say, why rush the Bill before this Assembly? Why rush the motion regarding the bells and changing the bells unilaterally? The people of Saskatchewan know that this bell-ringing motion is directly tied to the legislation that is before this House that is presently sitting in limbo.

I would ask the government to do the right thing. I would ask the cabinet to do the right thing and allow this motion to go back to committee. Do what the previous administration did. Refer the motion back to committee for further consideration and a further suspension period.

As I've indicated, the debate in 1989 indicated that the government, or the opposition at that time, was very strongly against unilateral changes and proposed an amendment, such as ours, that would send this motion back to committee.

It would appear that the government today who were then the opposition have short memories as they are now attempting to use their massive majority to ram this motion forward.

When I look at the motion and the amendment, I again go back to the debate in 1989. On June 12, 1989, and I believe this is some three weeks after the debate on the bell issue came to the floor and came to the forefront and hindered the, if you will, stopped the process of the legislature and the process of government, the then House leader, the member from Melfort, rose in this Assembly to speak to the Assembly. And at that time the House leader, the member from Melfort, rose and said:

I would seek leave of the Assembly to move a motion respecting rule no. 33, and the use of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures, and I would ask for leave to do that, Mr. Speaker.

(1930)

And I would just like to read into the record the motion that was brought forward by the Government House leader of the day. The Government House leader . . . and this is what he said, and I quote:

That, by leave of the Assembly, that notwithstanding the usual practices of the Assembly, the adjourned debate on the motion of the member for Kindersley to amend rule 33 shall remain on the order paper, and further the subject matter of that motion is hereby referred to the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures.

I find it very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that it seemed appropriate in that time and that period for the government to bring forward a motion after listening to all the arguments put forward by the opposition — an opposition which was two and a half times the size of this opposition and did have the numbers to stall the debate. And as we had some discussion just prior to the

continuation of the debate tonight, a number of members indicated they thought . . . reflected back on the debate in this House and the number of hours that they had spent indeed debating this motion before this Assembly.

But what I also find interesting, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to quote from the member from Regina Elphinstone, the then opposition House leader, the Government House Leader of today:

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the agreement that has been reached this evening between the Government House Leader and our caucus.

I think that is very interesting, and is telling, and it indicates that the government and the opposition of the day felt it was imperative to talk, to sit down and reach agreement. And if you couldn't reach agreement, at least to allow the committee . . . or the motion to go back to committee. And he says:

I want to say, before I take my place, a couple of things about how we came to the point where we're at in terms of bell-ringing, the motion that we dealt with for the past . . . better part of a month, and then tonight the agreement that has been concluded.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to know the way this issue started, with a Bill that was brought before the Assembly, a Bill that would have, in part, privatized SaskPower. And for that reason the opposition rang the bells for 17 days.

And as the member continued on in speaking to the motion to put the motion back to committee, he says:

On returning to this Assembly, a motion was put by the government that in order to avoid the bell-ringing, we believed, on SaskPower in the future, that a motion was rammed at this opposition and the people of the province that would have taken that tool away, had SaskPower Bills been reintroduced. And we said from day one that we believed that this was not a proper way to change the rules of the Assembly; that it went against the history of the legislature; that never before had rules been changed in that manner.

And I believe over the past period of time I have been laying out the same arguments and the reasons why we believe the same process should take place; why the government should listen to the opposition, why the government and the opposition should work together on a compromise, and part of that compromise should be allowing this motion to go back to committee.

And then the minister goes . . . or the member goes on, and says:

I guess I'm very pleased with the two weeks that we've debated this motion, that members on this side of the House and some on the government side have debated it, have now have been proven worthwhile; that we have achieved our goal that

we set on day one — that this should be solved in a committee of the Assembly.

And I guess one just has to wonder will the same process take place? Will we allow the same process to take place? Will we give the House the opportunity and the ability? Will the government indeed heed the arguments that have been presented by opposition members? Will the government indeed consult with the opposition and work towards an agreement? Or are we going to find that this government is going to go ahead and unilaterally change the rules, ramming them on us, pushing them on a small caucus, and then using the change in the rules to bring forward any legislation that they deem fit against the wishes of the people of Saskatchewan?

The member went on to say:

And to that end, I give the members of the opposition full credit and the members of the government side credit tonight for picking up on this option and recommendation that we had put to them on day one, that it go to a committee to report back to the Assembly.

Will we be able at the end of the day to turn around and to compliment the government for having heeded public opinion, for having heeded the concerns raised by the opposition in this legislature? Will we be able to give the Government House Leader a bouquet for the fact that he did take the time to consult with his colleagues and that after everyone sat down and consulted, that they listened to, and decided the motion brought forward by, the member from Wilkie was an appropriate motion, was an appropriate procedure, and that this motion brought forward by the member from Regina Churchill Downs should indeed go back to committee?

The member from Regina Elphinstone continued:

And so I say to you that it's an important event, and that the opposition, I think, can take full credit for the fact that when we started the session we believed fully that SaskPower should not be privatized in this session. And on that point the people of the province and the opposition, I think, have made their point, that that will not be privatized during this session.

One has to question whether or not this opposition, in relating and laying forward all their arguments, will indeed have the same concerns raised, have the same opportunities raised, that indeed the government will pay heed and address the issue on the same basis regarding not only the bell-ringing, and not only the committee — the fact that the committee should be allowed to proceed — but in fact, the placing the Bill before the Assembly that instigated the bell-ringing process, and the debate now taking place, that it would be put on the back burner and allow the process of justice to go forward without hindrance in the courts.

I continue on:

On the issue of the bell-ringing, we said that we should maintain that right during this session, and

to that end the people of the province have once again won this evening. And so I congratulate the members of the opposition and the members of the government who I believe will be voting for this motion.

I want to say, (however) the disappointment for myself and for members of the opposition is that it took the better part of a month — the better part of a month the government has held up the working of the Assembly, and that we could have had this agreement, I feel, many, many days ago. In fact, it was a suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition when he rose in his place the day after the motion was introduced, that we refer it to a committee.

And I believe I referred to that in my remarks the other day.

I think it could have been accepted at that time. I'm disappointed in that sense. But I want to say that the result tonight proves that the debate that we've been involved in for the past two weeks has been well worth while, and I'll be supporting the amendment.

With that, Mr. Speaker, the motion was put to the floor and the bells rang. Lo and behold, the bells rang. Well we all know the bells will ring whenever there's a motion put to the floor. Whenever a vote is called for, the bells will ring, calling the members in to vote.

And it's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, when you look back at the amendment that took place in 1989, look back at the arguments presented by the opposition of the day, look back at the arguments presented by the government of the day regarding bell-ringing, regarding the motion, and regarding the fact that it would be appropriate to deal with the question of bell-ringing, number one, when this motion came forward to send the motion back to committee for debate, further discussion, and to reach a consensus and consultation, the opposition of the day had agreed not to ring the bells for a long period of time. And I believe my colleagues and I have also indicated that this opposition will not hinder the process of government, will not ring the bells for a long period of time. But there will be the process of time when the bell-ringing question will come up and when the bells will ring to call members into this Assembly so that members can vote on the issues and the questions and the motions before it.

And so when the bells ceased ringing, Mr. Speaker, back in June 12, 1989, it's interesting to note that of the members who were available, they all voted in favour of sending this motion back to committee, back to the committee on special rules and regulations. All members in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker — government members, opposition members — all voted in favour of that motion.

So I think it would be very appropriate for the government to join with this opposition caucus in agreeing with the amendment placed forward by my colleague from Wilkie, an amendment that says that the report not now be concurred in but that it indeed be referred back to the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures for further

consideration of the time period over which a Bill may be suspended and for particular consideration of a process to trigger public hearings during such a suspension of a Bill.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, that would allow this House to proceed. And I think I can say that my colleagues and I would be more than willing to continue the process of government business, allowing the debate to continue on estimates, allowing the debate to continue on second readings on Bills, allowing the debate to continue on Committee of the Whole. Mr. Speaker, we're ready to work. We're ready to get on with the process of allowing the House to proceed. We're willing to get on with the process of allowing the government to bring their motions forward and their Bills forward.

But, Mr. Speaker, I must indicate that we must and we will, over a period of time and over the time that this House is in session, as opposition members and as opposition members attempting to be as effective as we can, and indeed speaking out on behalf of our constituents, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, standing up for their rights and privileges, will indeed take the time on a number of occasions, and I think there will be a number of occasions in the days to come, when we must stand up and speak very strongly and bring out a number of concerns in a number of areas that people across this province feel very strongly about.

And no doubt the constitution is going to be one area that people are going to want some input in. And I think I can say that consensus is going to be hard to find. But we must work towards that. We must strive for that, Mr. Speaker. And certainly as we look over the consensus that was built around the constitution, some members of this Assembly, and I indicated earlier, the Premier and I believe also the Minister of Justice as the constitutional critic for this province, probably at times were tearing their hair out as they looked at ways of how they could reach a consensus on the issue of the constitution. Well I think the same process is happening here in this province, that we must give the consensus . . . give the Rules Committee the ability to consult, to hold public hearings, to come up with recommendations that the people of Saskatchewan can work with and can agree on.

Mr. Speaker, I think it appropriate and I think it would be appropriate that this House would move on to further business and that the House would continue with other business in this Assembly and that we give all members of the Assembly tonight the ability to again vote on a motion that would move this House onto further business and allow the House to proceed. And so therefore at this time, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Assembly proceed to adjourned debates, item no. 3.

The division bells rang from 7:44 p.m. until 8:17 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 9

Neudorf	Toth
Muirhead	Goohsen
Boyd	D'Autremont
Martens	Haverstock
Britton	

Nays — 28

Van Mulligen	Hamilton
Wiens	Johnson
Tchorzewski	Trew
Teichrob	Draper
Shillington	Sonntag
Atkinson	Flavel
Kowalsky	Roy
MacKinnon	Cline
Penner	Wormsbecker
Cunningham	Crofford
Hagel	Knezacek
Bradley	Keeping
Lorje	Kluz
Murray	Renaud

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today and for the last few days we've been speaking on the motion by the member for Regina Churchill Downs, and that motion being:

That the Second Report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures now be concurred in.

Mr. Speaker, that motion was then amended by my colleague, the member from Wilkie, to read:

That the report not now be concurred in, but that it be referred back to the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures for further consideration of the time period over which a Bill may be suspended, and for particular consideration of a process to trigger public hearings during such a suspension of a Bill.

We've been discussing this motion since Tuesday, July 7. Mr. Speaker, there's been many good speeches given in that time, many good comments about the concerns that the members on this side of the House have about the original motion, and in support of the amendment from the member from Wilkie. I find it strange, Mr. Speaker, that the government members seem unwilling to speak on this important issue. Only two have spoken in favour of the motion — the original motion, that is, Mr. Speaker — but what of the other 53 government members? Have they no opinion in the matter or are they being muzzled by their House leaders?

Where are the members, Mr. Speaker, who spoke in 1989 when in opposition? They spoke in opposition to the eliminating of the power to ring bells as a parliamentary tool. Why have we not heard from the member from Saskatoon Riversdale? He talked for approximately 30 minutes in 1989 on the matter; the member from Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain, who spoke for over an hour; the member from Moose Jaw Palliser, who talked for hours on end; the member from Cumberland; the member from Prince Albert Carlton, who did speak on the motion. He spoke in favour though, Mr. Speaker, of ending the opposition's right to use bells as a parliamentary tool. The member for Saskatoon Nutana; the member for Regina Rosemont, who also talked, Mr.

Speaker, for hours on end; the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, Saskatoon Sutherland-University, and Regina Albert North.

Why, Mr. Speaker, will not one of these members defend the action being taken by their government today? Perhaps some of these members would rather speak against the motion. Perhaps they would feel more comfortable standing on this side of the House speaking against the government motion. They had considerable experience in doing that, Mr. Speaker, two years ago — three years ago. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they could give the very same speeches today that they gave in 1989, and those points, Mr. Speaker, would be just as valid in this debate concerning the elimination of bell-ringing as they were in 1989.

The member for Regina Churchill Downs spoke for over an hour on July 7, 1989. And I would like to quote from him, Mr. Speaker. That should be July 7, 1989, Mr. Speaker. Sorry about that. And the member from Regina Churchill Downs stated:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to address a comment with respect to the remarks made by the minister. If indeed child care or families in poverty were a priority, one would have thought the Government House Leader would have called that today, not this silly motion.

And, Mr. Speaker, if the motion was silly in 1989, it must surely still be silly today. We have given the government two opportunities today to go back to government motions, to deal with the business of the province.

Mr. Speaker, in 1989 the government allowed the opposition to go to government business. The entire debate in 1989 did not take place consecutively hour after hour, day after day, on the motion to eliminate bell-ringing.

At that time it was interspersed with government business. If the members felt it was so important to bring in a motion to extend sitting hours in this House, that it was so important that we go to government business at that point, why is it not so important today that we end this debate and go to government business? The member from Moosomin moved that we go to government business. The member for Arm River moved that we go to government business. And in both cases today, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite in the government voted against that motion.

In 1989, Mr. Speaker, when the House was debating this same type of motion, a similar motion to end bell-ringing, the House sat and discussed a similar motion as we are addressing today. It was discussed on May 11, 17, 18, 29, 31 and on June 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 12. Even on those days, some government business was carried out. The opposition carried out their filibuster with 26 members, Mr. Speaker, in 1989. And the government of 1989 did not continuously jam the opposition with the same motion day after day after day.

I'd like to quote again from the member for Regina Churchill Downs, from June 7, 1989. And the member

said:

Mr. Speaker, we have suggested to members opposite, to the Government House Leader and to the members of the cabinet, that there is no need for this legislation. There is no pressing necessity for it. The only reason that they are continue, obstinately and stubbornly, to insist that this matter be dealt with in advance of everything else is, I think, in part a pettiness, in part, Mr. Speaker, if you just had . . . in part, Mr. Speaker, they have a hidden agenda.

Mr. Speaker, we feel exactly the same way, that the government opposite has a secret agenda. But in this case, Mr. Speaker, it's not that secret. The agenda they wish to put forward is the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) Bill. And the GRIP Bill, Mr. Speaker, is what precipitated this entire action that we've been carrying on for the last week.

I'd like to quote again from the member for Regina Churchill Downs of June 7, 1989.

Mr. Speaker, we have suggested to members opposite that there is no need for this legislation. We have suggested to members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that there is unlikely to be another bell-ringing incident unless (you) . . . bring back SPC.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there's only one, small item in there that needs to be changed to make it relevant to the debate today. Instead of having SPC (Saskatchewan Power Corporation) as part of that quote, all you need to do is change it to GRIP.

And we feel the same way that the member did in 1989. Our amendment recommends that the motion go back to the Rules and Procedures Committee for reconsideration, and that a compromise and a consensus be developed by the committee, the Rules and Procedures Committee.

When the Bill is back in committee, this will allow the legislature to proceed on with government business. We want to proceed with government business, Mr. Speaker, yet is very obvious the government would rather play their power games. They even voted twice today, Mr. Speaker, not to allow government business to come to the floor of this House. They would rather force this destructive legislation on the province.

(2030)

Mr. Speaker, there is some legislation before this House that should be debated. If the government members were willing, we are more than willing to proceed on with other matters. There is a motion by the Minister of Agriculture, amended by the member for Kindersley, dealing with drought conditions in Saskatchewan and the 1991-1992 GRIP programs. While this motion is dated because it deals with drought in the south-west, and this drought, Mr. Speaker, has been somewhat alleviated in the past week or so, there is still a problem, and a major problem, Mr. Speaker, and that problem has now been shifted to the north areas of this province, the area north of

the Yellowhead highway. The drought is now in the Kelsey-Tisdale area, Nipawin, Shellbrook, Torch River, Melfort, Humboldt, Kinistino, Biggar, Wilkie, Turtleford, Meadow Lake, Redberry, Cut Knife-Lloyd constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, towns in these areas, the businesses in these towns, are also very concerned because they see the income of the area dropping because of the drought. This amendment, Mr. Speaker, would allow us to take this legislation back to the Rules and Procedures Committee and to get on with the business of the House. The farmers, the business people, all the people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, need to see the government getting on with the business that we should be dealing with, rather than dealing with, as the member for Regina Churchill Downs states it, this silly motion.

Mr. Speaker, to accept this amendment and to allow this motion to return to the Committee on Rules and Procedures would allow us to move on to item 6 of adjourned debates. This is a motion by the member for Elphinstone, the Government House Leader, that An Act to amend The Community Bonds Act, be read a second time.

The community bonds program is a very good program, introduced by the previous government. And I'm sure that all members of the House are aware of community bonds and the benefits that derive from a community's participation. To pass this amendment would allow the House to deal with second reading of this Act to Amend The Community Bonds Act.

I was surprised that government members would not vote to go back to the order of the day and proceed with their Bills, motions, Committee of the Whole, or Committee of Finance. Why would government members not want to discuss community bonds? A number of communities in my constituency wish to apply for community bonds. I'm sure my constituents are not the only ones interested in seeing just what will be the final result of this amendment, the amendment to The Community Bonds Act. They can then proceed with their plans for community bonds. There are already many communities which have community bonds in place, and they would like to know how this Act will affect them.

There are many other Bills that are in the same position, Mr. Speaker — Bills that are waiting for the government, for the House to proceed with action on them. All we have to do, Mr. Speaker, is take a look through what's called the blues, and we can see what is being held up in this House as we deal with the motion by the member from Regina Churchill Downs and the amendment by the member from Wilkie.

Another Act which the government proclaimed with great fanfare that is being held up and which no action is being taken at the present time, Mr. Speaker, is Bill No. 48. I have an interest in that Bill because it's in my critic area. This is An Act to Provide a Charter of Environmental Rights and Responsibilities.

If we could clear this motion and this amendment from the floor of the House to get back to government business, Mr. Speaker, we could deal with this Bill, Bill No. 48.

When the Bill first came to the floor of the House and had second reading, the minister in charge for the Environment asked that a committee be set up, a public committee, a standing committee of the House of this legislature to go out and visit with the public to get the public's view on this Bill, on the environmental charter of rights and responsibilities, to see what should be in that Bill.

Mr. Speaker, in this amendment that we have before the House today, that is what we are asking for: that Bills which are suspended on the floor of this legislature go out to the public in a committee for review, for public input. This would give everyone involved the opportunities to have their say, to express their views and air their concerns. It would also give the government, be it the government of today or the government of tomorrow, the opportunity to meld the public's input into their own philosophy to come up with a Bill that would represent the best for the province.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment proposed by the member from Wilkie asked that the suspended Bill go back to the committee. Not the committee, excuse me . . . well the committee for rules and procedures, but also that the committee, through consensus, through compromise in that body, put together a process to send suspended Bills to public hearings. That committee would sit and should sit at times outside of the seat of government to consider these Bills.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of committees, standing committees and special committees of this legislature which already do that. They're already in place. Some of them are empowered to meet outside of the seat of government. And those committees include: Agriculture, Communication, Crown Corporations, Education, Estimates, Municipal Law, Non-controversial Bills, Private Members' Bills, Privileges and Elections, Public Accounts, Constitutional Affairs; and we have four special committees: Nominating, Continuing Select, Special Committee on Rules and Procedures, which is where this motion that we are talking about today comes from, and Special Committee on Regulations.

As I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, some of these committees meet outside of the seat of government. That means that they move from Regina and can tour the province. And that is what we are asking in the amendment, the amendment made by the member from Wilkie, that the Rules and Procedures Committee do with any Bills that are suspended in the House.

The Municipal Law Committee this past winter, Mr. Speaker, did meet out of session and away from the seat of power. My seat mate, the member from Maple Creek, was part of that committee and they met in two or three different locations around the province outside of Regina. Saskatoon was one of those locations they met at. I believe Prince Albert was also one of those locations. And that gave the people of those areas the opportunity to participate, to make their ideas and their views known, and allowed the government to include those comments and those ideas in the legislation that was being considered.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned Bill No. 48 that the Environment minister has presented. She has asked that the same thing be done with that Bill, that a committee, a standing committee, be struck in this House; a permanent committee to review items concerning the environment — Bills, and particularly Bill No. 48, the charter of rights and responsibilities, the environmental charter of rights and responsibilities; that this committee be allowed to go outside of the seat of government and meet with the public.

Mr. Speaker, we in the opposition believe the amendment by the member from Wilkie should pass and that either a new committee be struck to review Bills which are suspended . . . This would be a new committee set up by the Rules and Procedures Committee, as a body of this House. It would have to have a motion on the floor of the House and be passed as other motions are, and as the motion to set up the Committee for Constitutional Affairs was set up and was passed and was agreed to by the members in the opposition. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are two members of the official opposition sitting on that committee, and the member from Greystone sits on that committee, so we're not opposed to that type of thing.

We are prepared to work with the government on items such as that. We would like to be able to work with the government on this particular motion, the bell-ringing. We believe that there is some room for compromise there, that there is room to develop a consensus. But to do that, this motion, this amendment, needs to be accepted to take the report back to the Rules and Procedures Committee, and there they can work on the consensus and the compromises.

Perhaps though, Mr. Speaker, a new standing committee based on the rules and procedures is not the way to go. Perhaps it would be better if once a Bill is suspended that it go to one of the committees that is already in operation. An example is the GRIP Bill that we have before us that the government tried to introduce in the middle of June. Rather than it come to the floor of the House, perhaps a draft copy of that Bill should be given to the committee for agriculture, which I believe has not sat since the 1930s. It's on the books all the time as being in place; there are people named to that committee but it never sits.

And maybe, Mr. Speaker, if the bell-ringing is to be eliminated . . . and we are not totally opposed to that, we are prepared to discuss that and to work on a compromise, but the motions that are suspended should be taken to a committee. In the case of GRIP, to the Agriculture Committee. The Agriculture Committee could take the draft Bill out around the province meeting in various central locations to give everyone the best possible access to have their input into the government's action. The government could then take that input and incorporate it into their Bill to provide a Bill that serves the needs and the desires of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to quote again from the member from Regina Churchill Downs. Mr. Speaker . . . make sure I'm quoting the right . . . The member from Regina Churchill Downs stated that:

If (the) members opposite were a little less

stubborn . . . (and this is quoted from June 7 in 1989). If (the) members opposite were a little less stubborn, a little less intransigent, and a little more thoughtful and in touch; if they spent a little more time in their riding . . .

We feel the same way as this statement from the member from Regina Churchill Downs states of June 7, 1989. If the members were in touch with their farm communities, Mr. Speaker, they would realize that the Bill that they tried to present to this House was not what the farmers wanted.

These comments are just as fair today as they were in 1989. Again to quote the member from Regina Churchill Downs, same day:

If this government did not have an agenda for privatization . . . Mr. Speaker, if members opposite didn't have that agenda, this wouldn't be on the agenda either.

And again, as in other quotes, it's only a matter of changing one word to make those exact same quotes relevant today to the debate we're having to remove bell-ringing as a power held by the opposition. All we have to do in this quote is change the word privatization to GRIP. If it were not for GRIP, Mr. Speaker, the government today would not be trying to ram this report down the throats of the opposition and the throats of the people of Saskatchewan.

Another quote, Mr. Speaker, from the same member, the member from Regina Churchill Downs:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we oppose this for a number of reasons and I'm going to (say), as I say, going to summarize them and then take my seat. We oppose this because it is out of keeping with the traditions of this House. We think those traditions have served this Legislative Assembly very well and should be maintained.

Mr. Speaker, the traditions of this House are just as valid, honourable, and are serving this Legislative Assembly just as well today as they were in 1989. And as the member said, it should be maintained.

(2045)

We on this side of the House agree. The traditions of this House have been developed over a long period of time, and they have been developed, Mr. Speaker, for a very good reason and to serve a very good purpose. And part of the tradition that has been developed over centuries has been the ability of the opposition to hold up and to influence government business. One of the manners in which the opposition can hold up government business is by ringing the bells. Another is in what I am participating in today, a filibuster. Both of them have their uses and their purpose, Mr. Speaker. Neither one of them is invalid.

Part of what the opposition's duty is to do, Mr. Speaker, is to scrutinize the government's business, and this is what we are trying to do, both in the GRIP motion and on this report that was presented to the House. We believe that

the amendment made by the member from Wilkie will indeed aid the House in carrying out its business. It will allow the government to move forward with their legislation, with their Bills and their motions, and it will allow the opposition to carry out their duty to scrutinize those affairs and to scrutinize the money that the government is spending.

We agree that the government . . . that the opposition should have the ability to hold government Bills up to the light of day for public scrutiny. Part of this scrutiny must include the ability to stall some legislation for an extended period of time, the ability by the opposition to hoist, or as the Associate Minister of Finance calls it, to heist a Bill — hoist, suspend a Bill, take it to a public committee for review.

This motion gives us the opportunity to seriously reconsider any of the rules of this legislation. The House committee reviewed the rules during the past winter. A number of changes were made. We now operate under those changes, Mr. Speaker. At the time those changes were discussed, bell-ringing was also part of the discussion. But, Mr. Speaker, at that time no consensus could be arrived at, so no changes were made. This was similar to 1989. No consensus could be arrived at on the motion to limit bell-ringing, so no changes were made.

Now, Mr. Speaker, only months after the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures brought forward their recommendation to the House on what rules we should change and how these new rules should operate in the House, only months later the government is now trying to unilaterally force a rule change on this House. Consensus was good and needed prior to this report. But now that the GRIP Bill has come before the House and has stalled, the government feels that it must force a rule change on the House to proceed with its agenda.

I'd like to quote from the member from Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain of May 17, 1989. And he says:

Let's be clear about one thing, too, Mr. Speaker. We used a legitimate mechanism of this Assembly when we walked out. We used a legitimate tool that was available to us. Members opposite seem to forget that they have walked out as well.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't have said that any better because it does seem to be the case that the members opposite or the members in government have indeed forgotten that they did walk out in 1989. They walked out and then filibustered on a motion to eliminate bell-ringing. Now the shoe is on the other foot. And, Mr. Speaker, that foot is being squeezed tight.

The member from Regina Albert North has some comments to make. He was one of those speakers that did stand up in 1989 and made many comments and gave a speech. I wish he would take the opportunity to stand up and give us the benefit of his wisdom in this matter.

There has only been two members — two members — from the government side of the House which have spoken on this issue. And I'm glad to see that the member from Regina Albert North wishes to speak on this motion.

And I will be pleased to allow him to speak when I am done my own speech.

The member for Regina Churchill Downs and the member for Prince Albert Carlton spoke in favour of bell-ringing in 1989. They stated that the opposition needed the tool of bell-ringing. Now in 1992 they speak in opposition to bell-ringing.

I would like to again quote from the member from Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain:

I think in the phone show he was on, of 12 callers, 10 were upset with him that his government had gone too far on this issue.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the government members today have seemed to have forgotten that there were a number of phone shows carried out about the GRIP program, and most of the callers to that program were in opposition to what the government was proposing to do. In fact there was very, very few members who spoke in favour of the government.

They have also seemed to . . . It also seems they have forgotten the farmers that were on the lawn of this legislature this spring before seeding — 500 farmers, Mr. Speaker — and they were opposed to the GRIP legislation. If this amendment is accepted, that we have proposed concerning this report, then those farmers will get a chance to sit, to attend a public hearing on the matter.

This amendment will allow any Bill which is suspended by the House to go out to public hearings. So the farmers that were on the lawn this spring, the farmers that attended the rallies around the province — in Shaunavon and Paradise Hill and in Regina here — will give them the opportunities to have their input into whatever program it is that the government is proposing to do, that the members of the opposition and that the members of the general public have a disagreement with.

I'd like to quote again from the member from Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain from May 17, 1989:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it must not be forgotten, as I said earlier, that 70 per cent of Saskatchewan residents, almost 70 per cent — 67 per cent surveyed by Angus Reid — opposed the Saskatchewan government's plan to privatize SaskEnergy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we didn't do a poll by Angus Reid but we did do a poll concerning the GRIP legislation. And we had almost 80 per cent support. And the majority of people surveyed, approximately two-thirds were from urban centres. Not the farmers, not the members of rural Saskatchewan who would know the issue and understand it, but the people from urban Saskatchewan, where they may not necessarily understand GRIP, Mr. Speaker, they do understand the idea of breaking a contract.

While the government may wish to scoff at the numbers, and some of the members opposite are indeed doing so, it

is noticeable that there have been no government polls released to contradict the one that we did. And one might ask why. The public could wonder and conclude that the government has something to hide.

I'd like to quote again from the member from Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain of May 17, 1989:

This rule change, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is very instrumental to the government in ramming its unpopular privatization plans down the throats of Saskatchewan people.

And I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the proposed rule change will go a long way towards perhaps putting in the hands of the government the power to steamroll over the wishes and the will of not only the opposition but the people of Saskatchewan with respect to the privatization of SaskPower, and make no mistake about it, other publicly-owned assets will be next, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The members opposite will try to justify this heavy-handed unilateral change of the rules of the House by claiming that the opposition would use the tactic of the bells on any issue in the future and could, in fact, paralyse the government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think if we take a look at that, that is exactly what the government today is claiming that the opposition could and would do. That the opposition would use this bell-ringing power to paralyse the government.

We're into the middle of our second session, Mr. Speaker, and that power has been used once and only once. In the history of this legislature, it's been used only twice for any extended periods of time, once by the government members and once by us.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment harms, if it's not passed, the very basis for our democracy. We have . . . The amendment would allow democracy to run its true course.

At an election there are two things that happen. A government is elected and an opposition is elected. The government has their responsibilities, as does the opposition. The opposition's duties are to hold the government accountable, to scrutinize their Bills and motions, to ensure that to the best of their ability the wishes, needs, and desires of the public of Saskatchewan are served.

There's also a third level that plays a factor in government, and that's the courts. And the courts are also there to hold not only the government but the general public, but certainly the government, accountable for their actions.

In this particular case, the report by the Rules and Procedures Committee would force a change that would not allow the courts to hold the government accountable for their action. Presently the GRIP situation is before the courts. And if the government presented the Bill, the GRIP

legislation, it would have perhaps an influence on the court's decisions.

By eliminating the bell-ringing, as this report would do so, it severely curtails the opposition's ability to hold the government accountable. Therefore, the only thing left that would have the ability to hold the government accountable would be the courts. And as in the case of the GRIP legislation, they are eliminating that accountability factor.

Mr. Speaker, in addressing the amendment, a number of points must be made. First, the government says the reason it needs this Bill to end bell-ringing is that the opposition cannot be trusted not to veto everything they disagree with. Well up to this point, Mr. Speaker, we've only done it once.

The amendment proposes that the Rules Committee reconsider the length of the suspension and the possibility for public hearings. And the point is this, Mr. Speaker, that if the government is worried about bell-ringing becoming routine, they should understand that in fact a three-day suspension is far more likely to become routine. In fact I would say that if this rule change goes ahead, three-day suspensions will become the normal process, just as there is a two-day notice requirement.

Now a Bill is presented to the House, notice is given that the Bill will be brought to the House two days hence. That's a routine procedure. If this report is accepted as presented, then the three-day suspension will also become a routine matter. It will simply mean that the government will have to bring their legislation forward either three days earlier or take three days longer to get it through the House.

The effect of this will be — that the government's proposed — is to insert another period of notice similar to the two-day notice that we already have. Just as the opposition agreed to extend the time allowed for replies to written questions from two to five days, adding three days now, the government is saying it is equally willing to extend the notice of motions period from two days to five days, or an extra three days. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is so trivial that you can well understand that it will become routine very, very quickly indeed.

(2100)

Let us just look at the order paper to compare what has happened. What would have happened under a three-day suspension and what would happen under a longer suspension accompanied by a public hearing? The whites of last Friday can be looked at as the record, which incidentally reflects a record of co-operation, co-operation with which the official opposition conducts itself. Our conduct is exemplary, Mr. Speaker, but I will get into that in a little bit.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Churchill Downs stated on July 7, '92, when he introduced the motion that:

We (meaning the NDP government) have no assurance . . . that this (meaning the bell-ringing) won't be used again and again.

That's from *Hansard* of July 7, 1992, page 1276.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that similar argument is why the government says they must limit the suspension to three days. The member from Regina Churchill Downs said there is many pieces of legislation put forward in this House that we have not agreed with. That's true. There were a number of Bills presented to this House, both in the session last fall and in this session, that we did not agree with. But what did we do about them? We did not ring the bells, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's my point.

To do so, I'm going to refer to the whites of July 3. I see recorded on the whites that on May 13, 1992, Bill No. 5, An Act to amend The Wascana Centre Act . . . Not to create any confusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm referring to the *Votes and Proceedings* dated July 3, 1992, which contain within them the notation of An Act to amend The Wascana Centre Act as having received first reading on May 13, 1992. On that day, Bill 1 passed first reading. It passed without any incidents. Did we ring the bells? No we did not. Was there great rancour and shouting and movement about the Chamber? No there was not. This was introduced very swiftly, no problem, Mr. Speaker.

Now if there had been in place in this House the proposed three-day suspension rule, what would have happened? Very probably that Bill would not have reached first reading at that stage. Because we didn't have any forewarning what was in the Bill, no three-day suspension would have been declared. By the same token, if there were instead a 60-day or a 30-day suspension period, it would have assuredly not have been used at that stage. We would have . . . could have suspended the Bill at that point for the three days. But if it had've been a 60-day suspension — as has been proposed at some point during this debate — then it wouldn't have been used.

Because like the ringing of the bells, a 60-day suspension is a very heavy hand for an opposition to use. And it would only be used in the most dire of circumstances.

Prolonged suspension is very serious, and the triggering of public hearings is a very big step, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Not quite as dramatic or as serious as ringing the bells for a long period, particularly since only one Bill is affected and does not stop the Assembly from operating, none the less it would be a serious thing to do and you can be assured, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we would not have exercised the right to suspend on Bill 5.

On May 21, 1991, Bill No. 5, An Act to amend The Wascana Centre Act, passed second reading. By that time we did know what was in the Bill. We had a chance to review the Bill and could have made a determination on what to do with it. The official opposition did not stand in the way of this piece of legislation. We may not have liked all that this Bill contained, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we certainly didn't walk out of the House and let the bells sound.

We are responsible, therefore we act responsibly. But now ask, if the three-day suspension were in place, what would have happened? Well I suggest to you, Mr.

Speaker, that on second reading of an important Bill, to the people of Saskatchewan, it is very likely indeed that we would have asked that the Bill be delayed from second reading for three days to give the public a chance to gather their thoughts on the Bill. We most certainly would have used such a small and insignificant measure in the public interest.

So on second reading of Bill 5, the three-day suspension would have been invoked, and it would have been used to give the public their first chance to get more than a passing glance at the Bill before it was debated in principle — the debate in principle being the second reading stage debate. This gives the public a chance to know what is going on before the process becomes irrevocably committed to passage. So Bill 5 would have been the subject of a three-day suspension at second reading.

Now what would have happened if a 60-day suspension with public hearings was the alternative? What would the opposition have done then? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would not have triggered the process on Bill 5. We would not have done that because it would not have been reasonable in the circumstances.

There were no extremely basic issues at stake, and the will of the Saskatchewan people, clearly on the subject of the Bill . . . was reasonably clear on the subject of the Bill — certainly clear enough that what further needed to be brought out could be brought out in second reading debate itself.

So as long as the suspension period would not have been used to trigger on Bill 5, 60 days was not necessary for that Bill, Mr. Speaker. There was no need to hold up that legislation.

What do we see here in relationship to the amendment before us today? We see that experience with Bill 5 tell us that bell-ringing did not happen, that a long suspension would not have been used, but that a three-day suspension would almost certainly have been applied. So clearly a three-day suspension in regard to Bill 5 would not have accomplished what the Rules Committee intended.

The Rules Committee intend the suspension to serve as a replacement for prolonged bell-ringing. That is clear from the report. It's a replacement for the power to ring bells indefinitely. But it is also clear from our examination of the process that it would affect Bill 5, that the intention of the committee would not and will not be served.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the next example. We need to be very comprehensive in our examination of this amendment. We need to be very comprehensive in examining the cases we have experience with because the government's entire argument rests on the fact that if there is more than a three-day suspension, it would become routine that the opposition would use a prolonged suspension without discretion.

So we must be comprehensive and look at each instance to see what would have happened under three days, what would happen under the existing rules, and what would

happen if the committee reconsidered and expanded the time to some longer period — perhaps 45 days, perhaps 60 days, but some period of time longer than three days.

So if we return to look at our *Votes and Proceedings*, what is frequently referred to as the whites, if we look back into the whites for July 2, 1992, we can examine the next example. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I should have said July 3, 1992 not July 2, 1992. If we look to the whites for that day we will find the next example. On May 13, 1992, Bill No. 6, An Act to amend The Meewasin Valley Authority Act passed first reading. It passed first reading without any hesitation on the part of the opposition. We were prepared to accept that legislation to come forward. Under the current rules and procedures, this Bill was considered next.

There is another one of the members . . . this was another one of the member from Melfort's Bills. And I ask the member from Melfort, did we ring the bells on that Bill? No we did not, Mr. Speaker. We did not ring the bells on An Act to amend The Meewasin Valley Authority Act. We could have, but we did not do so. We did not ring the bells and Bill 6 received first reading without any disruption of any kind. It was brought into the Assembly and it received first reading as is recorded in the votes and procedures.

We take bell-ringing very seriously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we would not abuse it. The amendment to the report as presented by the member from Wilkie would allow us to retain that right which we have and which we will continue to use responsibly.

On May 12, 1992, another of the Environment minister's Bills was considered. This Act to amend The Environmental Management and Protection Act passed without first reading. And as you recall, Mr. Speaker, on July 3, 1992, Bill 3, An Act to amend The Environmental Management and Protection Act, passed second reading. At any stage prior to that, Mr. Speaker, at first reading we could have exercised our right to ring the bells but we did not do so. We looked at the Bill; we allowed it to come forward to the floor of the House. We gave it first reading. It went to second reading and we allowed it to proceed from there. It passed second reading again after we had debated it on the floor of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat familiar with this Bill. As the Environment critic, I have watched this Bill proceed through the House, and we did not stop it from proceeding as the government would seem to indicate that we would do with every Bill that came before the House. We have been responsible. We have allowed a number of Bills to proceed all the way to Royal Assent.

Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Bill 4 came forward into the House, An Act to amend The Wakamow Valley Authority. The Act passed first reading on May 13, 1992. Again this was an Act in which we had the opportunity to ring the bells on first reading. We did not do so. We let it go through to second reading.

On May 21, 1992, An Act to amend The Wakamow Valley Authority Act passed second reading. There were a number of people who had some concerns about that Bill, Mr. Speaker, and we brought those forward in

debate. The government members had their opportunities to speak, we took our opportunities to speak, but no place in there, Mr. Speaker, did we ring the bells. The bell-ringing is a very powerful tool, and like all powerful tools must be used with caution.

On May 25, 1992, the Act to amend The Wakamow Valley Authority Act went to committee. And as we all know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the committee gets into the intimate details of any Act. On May 25, 1992, the very same day, an Act to amend The Wakamow Valley Authority Act passed into third reading. On June 3, 1992, Royal Assent was given to the Act to amend The Wakamow Valley Authority Act.

So this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, proceeded all the way through the House, through its various stages — first reading, second reading, Committee of the Whole, and third reading, and Royal Assent — without the opposition using a tool which they have at their disposal, and that is the ringing of the bells.

The report as brought forward by the member for Regina Churchill Downs would deny the opposition that tool on the assumption that the opposition members would use this as a regular basis. And that's simply not the case, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Bill No. 7, An Act to amend The Assessment Management Agency Act, passed first reading on May 13, 1992. We had a busy day on May 13, 1992. Again we had the opportunities, but we didn't stop the Bill from proceeding.

On July 3, 1992, an Act to amend The Assessment Management Agency Act passed into second reading. This Bill could have come forward sooner. We were prepared to talk about it, but it's the government's agenda that sets the dates and when Bills . . . as they move through the House. We could have stopped it at that point. We did not do so.

(2115)

Bill No. 8, an Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act, passed first reading on May 13, 1992. My seat mate, the member from Maple Creek, is not impressed with that Act. But again, we did not use the power of the bells to stop that Act from proceeding. We could certainly have done so, but we did not.

And on May 22, 1992, An Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act passed into second reading. We talked at great length on that Bill. The member from Maple Creek certainly had his opportunity to express his point of views on it, and he did do so. The members of the general public made their views known to the members in the opposition as to what their concerns were on these Bills.

On May 25, 1992, An Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act went into committee. And there in committee the members of the opposition took the opportunity to ask questions concerning that Bill detail by detail, item by item. And on May 25, 1992, An Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act passed into

third reading. On June 3, 1992, Royal Assent was given to the Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act.

So this Bill originally came forward on May 13, received first reading on May 13, second reading on May 21, Committee of the Whole on May 25, and third reading on May 25.

This Bill moved through the House fairly rapidly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So the idea of limiting the bells, as presented in the report from the Special Committee of the Rules and Procedures, does not seem necessary in this case because the bells were not used to limit the government's agenda. The opposition acted responsibly. We take our job responsibly. We take the statements that we make in this House responsibly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 9, An Act to amend The Mineral Taxation Act, 1983, passed first reading on May 14, 1992. Again, from the sound of the name, An Act to amend The Mineral Taxation Act could cause great concern in my constituency because in my constituency we have a fair amount of oil. And when you start talking about mineral taxation, everybody's ears perk up. And they wonder, well should the opposition be stopping this kind of a Bill? Well perhaps we should or shouldn't, but we did not do so, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We did not use the bell-ringing to stop that Bill from coming before the House.

On May 22, 1992, An act to amend The Mineral Taxation Act, 1983, passed second reading. We took the opportunity during second reading to make our concerns known, to make the concerns of our constituents known, the constituents from Maple Creek, from Kindersley, from Souris-Cannington, Estevan, Weyburn, all those constituents who may have a concern with an Act with the name of The Mineral Taxation Act. This amendment, as presented by the member from Wilkie, would allow us to retain the right to hold up that type of legislation if, as an opposition, we deemed it necessary, and if we had the support of the general public to do so.

On May 25, 1992, An Act to amend The Mineral Taxation Act, 1983, went to committee, and at that point we asked questions dealing with that Act. On May 25, 1992, An Act to amend The Mineral Taxation Act, 1983, passed into third reading. This Bill moved through the House from May 14 to June 3 without any severe interruptions — three weeks, Mr. Speaker.

While I am new in this House, it would seem to me that a Bill that moves through the House in three weeks is moving through fairly rapidly, that the government has done their duty in presenting a Bill that serves a particular need, that the opposition has done their duty in bringing forward any concerns that the public and the opposition may have, but yet the Bill has moved through the House to serve its purpose. And a responsible opposition will do that. It will meet the needs at the time, as seen by the general public and the opposition, in dealing with government legislation.

But the power of the bells is not always used. And in fact, it is rarely used. On June 3, 1992, Royal Assent was given to that Act, the Act to amend The Mineral Taxation Act, 1983.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 10, An Act to amend The Crown Minerals Act and to make consequential amendments to certain other Acts resulting from the enactment of this Act, passed first reading on May 14, 1992. This particular Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did concern us. We took the opportunities, while the Bill was sitting in first reading, to go out and discuss the issue with the public. Members of the public brought their concerns to our attention. This Bill is still on the order paper because those concerns . . . the members of the public took those concerns to the government, and the government is now hopefully considering the implications that this Act would have on the people involved in Crown minerals, on the mining industries, on the oil industries.

This is also a Bill, Bill 10, which has an impact on my constituency, which has an impact on the constituencies of many of my fellow colleagues. But we did not ring the bells on this Act. We were responsible. We realize that bell-ringing is a tool that can only be rarely used. If it's used extensively, then it is abused.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 11, An Act to amend The Marriage Act, passed first reading on May 19, 1992. We didn't hold this Bill up, as the member from Regina Churchill Downs would seem to indicate that opposition would always do if it has the power to ring bells. We have not taken this opportunity, the opportunity in the case of The Marriage Act, to hold up the legislation from proceeding into the House.

On May 25, 1992, An Act to amend The Marriage Act passed second reading. Again, as opposition, we certainly had the opportunity to ring the bells, but again we did not do so. On May 25, An Act to amend The Marriage Act went into committee — same day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And on that same day, on May 25, 1992, An Act to amend The Marriage Act passed third reading. So that Bill went through second reading, through Committee of the Whole, and through third reading all in the same day.

Now an obstructionist opposition could have held up that Bill for a long period of time, just as we could have held up Bill 10 and the other Bills that I have mentioned prior to this.

On June 3, 1992, Royal Assent was given to the Act to amend The Marriage Act. So the Bill had made it completely through the House and was now law.

Bill 12, An Act to amend The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act, passed first reading on May 19, 1992. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the opposition did not use the power that we have, that we still have today, but that we are discussing in the report from the special Rules and Procedures Committee and as was amended by the member from Wilkie. We have not used this power.

Now if we were to change this to three days, we would certainly, almost certainly, be using the three-day rule, suspension rule, on almost every piece of legislation, because it does not significantly affect the government's agenda and it does not significantly affect government legislation. But in not affecting government's agenda, it

also does not give the opposition any power to have any meaningful influence on that legislation.

On May 25, 1992, An Act to amend The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act went to second reading after it had received . . . and went to committee after it had received second reading on May 21. We had some questions with this Act, Mr. Speaker, and we dealt with them. We did not hold up the procedures by ringing the bells; we asked questions. We made comments and debate during second reading and we asked questions during the Committee of the Whole. And that was enough for us, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We did not have to hold up that legislation by ringing the bells. We have not and will not ring the bells on every piece of legislation at every opportunity when it comes before the House.

On May 25, 1992, An Act to amend The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act passed third reading, and on June 3, it received Royal Assent. On June 3, there were many Bills that received Royal Assent, and those Bills had moved through the House. From when the House initially started sitting in this section, I believe on April 27 to the June 3, we didn't ring the bells. We talked about the various Bills that came forward, we debated them, we asked questions, and we did the job that the opposition is supposed to do in scrutinizing the government business. But we did not use the power to ring the bells.

But if we had the opportunity, as presented in the report, to hold those Bills up for three days at some point during their passage through the House, we would almost certainly have done so. It would become a routine part of House proceedings. The same as when a Bill . . . when the government wishes to bring a Bill into the House they first give notice, 48 hour notice of the Bill being presented to the House.

It would simply become a routine matter that the House would get a 48 hour notice of a Bill coming to the House. The Bill would be presented and read for the first time. And then at some point there would likely, most very likely, be a three-day suspension of that Bill, at some point during its passage through the House.

Bill 13, An Act to amend The Adoption Act, passed first reading on May 19, 1992. And that was a Bill which my colleague from Arm River and my colleague from Moosomin had some serious concerns about it. But they did not, again, they did not take the opportunity to stop that legislation from proceeding through the House.

On June 3, 1992, An Act to amend The Adoption Act passed second reading. The member from Arm River made his comments during debate concerning this Bill, and at the end of those comments, the Bill was allowed to pass into this committee . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. I've listened to the member with great care, and I must confess that I'm having some difficulty in relating what it is that he is now saying and has been saying now for some time to the questions that are before the House.

The question before the House is the amendment to the main

motion. The member has spoken to the main motion. The member is now speaking concurrently to the amendment and to the motion, but the tenor of most of his remarks seem to be geared at the main motion itself.

I think that the member should try, as much as possible, to relate what it is that he is saying to the amendment that is before the House. And it may well be of necessity that he will want to refer to the main motion. That is appropriate. But the member should try to relate his remarks and his examples to the amendment as well. And I encourage the member to keep that in mind.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The amendment made by the member from Wilkie allows us to refer . . .

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

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder if by leave of the member from Souris-Cannington, if he would mind answering a question of mine.

The Deputy Speaker: — Well, that's entirely up to the member for Souris-Cannington, I would submit, if he wants to answer a question.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to accept the question from the member from Maple Creek.

(2130)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I note that I'm getting some rather odd reaction from the government side because they don't understand that it's important for us to put into the record what we have on our minds, rather than just simply pass it between us as colleagues. It's important that the public know what our questions among one another are so that we can get the people to know what the issues are.

And my question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is: I would like to know from the member from Souris-Cannington, what kind of public support you are getting on this issue from your constituents? Do you think that they want the opposition to continue to try to preserve the tools that we have being debated here? Do you, for example, think that the people out there want you to try to retain the tool of bell-ringing to use on such issues as perhaps hospital closings, on such issues as perhaps tax increases on crude oil?

What do you think about the 8 per cent tax increase from 7 per cent and how it relates to cross-border shopping? Do you think your people down there would like us, as an opposition, to use the tool of bell-ringing for that issue to try to bring home some attention to these matters? That's the gist of my question, and I would like that answered.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I would like to thank the member from Maple Creek for that question. I have indeed been receiving a fair amount of support on this item, on the amendment, that it go back to the committee to retain either the bell-ringing or some other means by which the opposition can have an influence on government's legislation. On the particular issue of GRIP, I have been receiving total support on the issue of whether or not we

should be allowed to ring bells.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I attended a church function yesterday afternoon at which there were many people from both in and out of the province. And while the people did not understand what we were discussing here today about the amendment on the report, they did understand the fact that the government at times needs to have brakes applied to its progress, that the opposition needs to be able to use either the bell-ringing or as in the case of the amendment where it would go back to the committee of rules and regulations, that some form of suspension, some time period for suspension would be in place there, and that the rules, that a committee would be set up to review whatever this Bill was that was being suspended.

The member from Maple Creek asks about hospitals. I am very sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my constituents, the people of Souris-Cannington, in particular the towns of Gainsborough, Oxbow, Redvers, and Arcola, would be and are adamant that this amendment as presented be passed, that they get the opportunity to have a say on whether or not their hospitals close. They want the idea of public hearings to be part of whatever solution we come up with in this House.

Public hearings are very important. The people in Gainsborough have a relatively new hospital. They're an older community with many seniors that reside there. They would want to have the opportunity, if a motion came before this House to eliminate, to close, or to change their hospital, they would very much want to have the ability to go to public hearings and to speak there, to let the government know what their feelings are. And in some communities it may very well be that the public in place would be happy to have their hospital close. But I can say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that is not in my constituency.

The people in my constituency would very much like to have the opportunities that are presented in this amendment that a Bill which is suspended in the House, if it was dealing with hospitals, that it would be able to go to public hearings.

The hospital in Arcola, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is an older hospital. Not only would they like to go to public hearings as made possible by this amendment if this amendment were accepted, they would not only want to discuss the closure of their hospital, but also the reconstruction of that hospital.

For the benefit of the member from Maple Creek in the concerns of hospitals, this amendment as presented by the member from Wilkie, "for particular consideration of a process to trigger public hearings during such a suspension of a Bill" be in place, that if a Bill dealing with the hospital in Oxbow were to come forward, that the people in Oxbow be given the opportunity to express their ideas and concerns. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hospital in Oxbow is currently under construction. A totally new facility is being built there and if a Bill was to be brought forward that would eliminate that hospital, that would change it into some other form, I am very sure from the comments being made this past weekend that

the people in Oxbow would like to take the opportunity as presented in this amendment to hold public hearings.

In the case of the taxation that the member from Maple Creek mentioned, if a Bill dealing with cross-border shopping was to be presented to the House, and if that Bill were to be suspended, and if the amendment as presented by the member from Wilkie were to be adopted, then the people living along the border — and not just in my own constituency but in the constituency of the member from Estevan, the member from Bengough-Milestone, the member from Assiniboia, the member from Shaunavon — I'm sure those businesses would all want to have the opportunity to participate in public hearings. And it would not affect just the people who live along the border but also all of the businesses and the people in Saskatchewan, because not just businesses are affected but also consumers and they would want to have a say in whatever legislation was being brought forward.

So I hope that I have, Mr. Speaker, answered the questions for the member from Maple Creek. Because the whole process, the whole idea of being able to take a Bill that has come before this House, has been suspended, out to the general public, is very important. The general public needs to have the opportunity to make its views known. They have the opportunity now through the members of the House, but at times, Mr. Speaker, the members of the general public wish to be able to present their views to a government body, to where they think that the government may accept some input. And the public hearing process gives the public the feeling that they indeed are having an opportunity to present their ideas, their solutions to a problem, to a government body where they will be heard and hopefully where they will be considered.

If the public process, as outlined by the member from Wilkie in his amendment to the report, if it works in the way that it is conceived, as in a manner in which the rules — the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures — would develop it, then the public would indeed have that opportunity to present their ideas. The government would hopefully accept the recommendations that comes from those committees — be it the Committee of Agriculture, or the Education Committee, or all that list of committees that I had gone through prior to this. And fact is, Mr. Speaker, we just had a new committee struck not that long ago. It passed through the House with no problem. We debated it but it passed. And that was the establishment of a new Standing Committee on the Constitution.

The public in the election of October 21 stated that they wanted to have a chance to speak on any constitutional changes which occurred to Saskatchewan. They said they wanted . . . they spoke in the plebiscite which was held at that election, approximately 65 to 70 per cent said they wished to have a voice in any decision which was made on the constitution. If a constitutional Bill were presented to this House, then under the amendment by the member from Wilkie, that Bill could be suspended at some point during its passage through the House, and then if the Committee accepts the recommendation of the member from Wilkie, public hearings could be held. The public could have their direct input into constitutional affairs.

And that is what the Committee for the Constitution has been set up to do.

So right now it would seem that that committee will deal with whatever recommendations the Premier brings back from the meetings in Ottawa. But perhaps when the Bill comes back into the House — or some other Bill — if the amendment as proposed by the member from Wilkie were accepted, then that could turn around and go back out into the public to be reviewed by the public, that recommendations would come back into this House through the committee for consideration, and if those recommendations meet with the view of the general public, then accept it. We are not prepared to hold up Bills that suit the needs of the general public and that suit the needs of the province. We are prepared to be reasonable and responsible in how we deal with the legislation that comes before the House.

Some other Acts passed this House and the member from Regina Churchill Downs seems to indicate that if the report is accepted, but if the amendment is rejected, then all will be well and good. If the report were to be rejected by the House then the opposition would be continuously using the bell-ringing as a tool to hold up the government's business, and that has simply not been the case in the past and would not be the case in the future. But under the amendment it would give us the opportunity to take a Bill that comes before the House, postpone it for a period of time, and allow the public to scrutinize it.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 14, An Act to amend The Child and Family Services Act, passed first reading on May 19, 1992. Under the proposal made by the member from Regina Churchill Downs, we could have held up that Bill for three days. But we did not do so. Under the old rules that we currently operate under, we could have held up the Bill indefinitely if that had been our desire. But under the Bill, under the report, the amended report as amended by the member from Wilkie, we could have suspended the Bill for X period of time — whatever is finally decided on by the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures — and asked that it be taken to the public to be reviewed.

And this is one of the Bills that we did have some concerns about, but in debate with the minister, in second readings with the minister, our concerns were somewhat clarified and mollified. Bill 14 passed second reading on June 3, and on July 2, An Act to amend The Child and Family Services Act went to committee. And it was at that point, Mr. Speaker, under the report, the way the report would set out the rules, again we could have held it up for another three days, but we didn't do so. Under the rules we operate today, we could have rang the bells and held it up indefinitely, but we did not do so. But if there was a strong need as indicated by the public, under the amended rules, we could have suspended the Bills and gone to public hearings. Because there were some people that had some very serious concerns about this Child and Family Services Act, just as there were for The Adoption Act.

On July 2, 1992, An Act to amend The Child and Family Services Act passed into third reading. It had made it through the House and now only awaited Royal Assent.

So the amendment that allows this report to go back to the committee for review and for consensus is very important. We have not been abusing — neither did the government members when they were in opposition abuse — the right to use the bells.

Bill 15, An Act to amend The Wills Act, passed first reading on May 20, 1992. On May 25, it passed second reading. This Act went right through the House without any problems. We didn't hold it up as we could have under the member from Regina Churchill Downs's proposal. We could have stopped it at some point for three days. We didn't do so. We certainly would have done so under those rules. We would have held it up at some point for the three days. But under the current rules, the bell-ringing unlimited, we did not do so. And if we felt the need was there under the amended proposal by the member from Wilkie, we could have suspended it for the three days and allowed the general public to have access through public hearings to make their comments. This Bill was given Royal Assent on June 3.

(2145)

Bill 16, an Act to amend The Jury Act, passed first reading on May 20, and second reading on May 25. If we were to use the rules as proposed by the member from Regina Churchill Downs in the report to suspend Bills — we could use it to suspend Bills at some point, for three days — every Bill that proceeded through the House would most likely be held up for those three days. Whereas today, under the rules as they exist, the ability to ring bells is not used to hold up legislation.

In this particular Bill, this particular motion, we are certainly holding up procedures with the filibuster. But we would not use the bell-ringing on these Acts that I have mentioned, to hold up their progress through the House. The public has access to them, we make the comments that the public provides us with, the information they have concerns about. But we don't necessarily hold up the Bills just to be vindictive.

Bill 16 went to the committee on May 25, the same day it received second reading. And it also passed third reading on May 25, and on June 3 it received Royal Assent.

Bill 17, an Act to amend the Commissioners for Oaths Act, passed first reading on May 20, 1992. And as with all the other Bills that I have mentioned, we didn't ring the bells on it. We talked about it; we allowed it to move through the House. Under the proposed rule changes by the member from Regina Churchill Downs, and the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures, we would almost certainly have used the three-day suspension on this Bill to provide us with more time to contact the people who may be interested, who may be affected by this Bill.

But did we use the bell-ringing to do so? No we did not. The amendment as proposed by the member from Wilkie, if the opposition felt it was necessary, if they were receiving the comments from the general public that this Bill should be suspended, would do so. And then if the amendment were accepted as proposed by the member from Wilkie, public hearings would be held to determine

exactly what the stand of the public is on the matter, to have their input so that the government could include that as part of the legislation that they're presenting, and included as part of the changes that they are making to any Bill or to the new legislation that they may be presenting.

If a new Bill comes forward, it would be very beneficial to the public at large to have the ability to go to public hearings at some point and make their views known, make their concerns known. But under the motion as presented by the member from Churchill Downs that is not part of it. But under the amendment by the member from Wilkie, the idea of public hearings is definitely part of the procedure, as outlined, to be considered by the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures.

On May 25, An Act to amend The Commissioners for Oaths Act passed second reading. Again in this Bill we did not use the power of ringing the bells to hold it up, but under the original motion, the report as presented by the House, we almost certainly would have. But with the amendment as presented by the member, that would not have been necessary. The time frame would have been a lot longer. If we suspended a Bill, it would mean it was that much more serious. So you take that responsibility a lot more heavily. The three-day suspension does not really do anything to the government's agenda or to a Bill that's being held up. Most Bills that come forward into the House do not proceed in one day or even two days or three days. It takes a period of time for those Bills to move through the House and an additional three days at some point would not be a great inconvenience.

The Act to amend The Commissioners for Oaths Act passed second reading on May 25. It also passed . . . went through the committee on May 25, and received third reading on May 25 and Royal Assent on June 3. This was another one of the Bills that we did not obstruct in the House. We could have but we did not.

Now Bill 18, An Act to promote Regulatory Reform in Saskatchewan by repealing Certain Obsolete Statutes passed first reading on May 20. Now when this one was presented to the House under the report rules, as presented by the member from Regina Churchill Downs, we may have had some questions as to just what was being eliminated here. We could have suspended it for a period of time, or under the current rules we could ring the bells. But under the amended formula as presented by the member for Wilkie, we could certainly have suspended the Bill for 45 days, 60 days, whatever, if we felt that was necessary at the time, if the public had a great concern over this Bill and allowed it to go to public hearings and to be aired.

The Act to promote Regulatory Reform in Saskatchewan passed second reading on May 25. May 25 it went into committee. And on May 25 it also passed third reading. And on June 3 this Bill received Royal Assent.

No place in there, Mr. Speaker, did we hold it up. We allowed it to proceed through the House in the proper manner. We could have, under the proposed rule change, held it up for three days but we did not do so.

Bill 19, An Act to amend The Contributory Negligence Act passed first reading on May 22, 1992. Under the amendment as proposed by the member from Wilkie for particular consideration of a process to trigger public hearings during such a suspension of a Bill, if we had suspended the Bill, then the amendment as presented by the member from Wilkie would have been part of what would happen. The Bill would be suspended for a certain period of time and then we would go to public hearings.

Or, as the rules stand today, we could have rang the bells. But we did not do so. So the power of that suspension, that long-term suspension, the power of ringing the bells being equivalent to a certain degree, are not used but only rarely.

Bill 20, An Act to amend The Surface Rights Acquisition and Compensation Act passed first reading on May 22, 1992. This is an Act which, from the title of it, is also of concern to the people of my constituency as they are to a good many of the members in this House. We did not ring the bells on this Act. But under the amended . . . not amended, rules as the report recommends, we could have suspended it for three days.

But if it were as much of a problem as the name could imply, then under the member from Wilkie's amendment . . . that the Bill be suspended for a period of time and that for particular consideration a process to trigger public hearings during such suspension. If the public hearing process were in place, then that Bill would have gone to the public's hearing, taken that period of time, whatever the suspension was for. The Bill could have come back into the House after that point for passage through the House. But in the mean time, the public would have had their opportunity to have a look at the Bill and to have a say on what was included in that Bill.

On June 3, 1992, An Act to amend The Surface Rights Acquisition and Compensation Act passed second reading. We didn't stop it.

Bill 21, An Act to continue SaskEnergy Incorporated, to make certain consequential amendments to certain Acts resulting from that continuance and to validate certain transactions involving SaskEnergy Incorporated, passed first reading on May 25, 1992.

Well, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure the other members of the House are also aware that an Act dealing with SaskEnergy created quite a furor in the House in 1989. But on this date, May 25, 1992, the Act was not held up in the House as it was in 1989. We allowed it to proceed through first reading. We had the same power that stopped the SaskEnergy Bill in 1989. We had the power to ring the bells but we did not do so.

Under the member from Wilkie's amendment, that a certain period of time be fixed for a suspension on a Bill, and that it trigger a public hearing process, if we had had serious concerns about this, and if the government members when they sat in opposition had the opportunity to utilize the rules as proposed by the member from Wilkie, then they could have suspended that Bill for a certain period of time and taken it out to the public to have the public's comments and inputs.

It would have been beneficial to them. It would have been beneficial to the government. It would have been beneficial to the people of Saskatchewan, because during that time that that suspension took place the business of the House would have proceeded. For that 17 days, or for whatever sitting days were in that 17 days, the business of the House would have been conducted.

This spring, in that period of time that we rang the bells on the government's GRIP legislation, had the amendment been approved that the member from Wilkie proposed, then that Bill could have gone out to public view, could have gone out to the public for comment and then come back into the House at a later point for passage through the House, for debate in the House.

Bill 22, An Act to amend The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Act, passed first reading on May 26. Now, why would we want to suspend this Bill for three days? I don't know, but under the proposed rule as amended, as proposed in the report by the member from Regina Churchill Downs, this Bill would almost certainly have been suspended for the three days.

But it received, this Act . . . in fact, had second reading waived. It was allowed to proceed through the House immediately. Not only was second reading waived, but taking it to committee was also waived. And on May 26, the same day that the Bill was presented, An Act to amend the Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Act passed third reading.

Now, the Lieutenant Governor cannot come into the House every day to pass a Bill that makes it through the House, so she came in on June 3, 1992, and gave Royal Assent to the Act to amend The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Act, along with many other Bills that we had already passed in this House.

Now with a time period greater than the three days to suspend a Bill, as proposed by the member from Wilkie in his amendment to the report, we would not have used that power, but we may just have used a three-day suspension because this Act . . . we were notified of this Act 48 hours before it came in on May 26, so there was a two-day delay in there already. It would almost certainly, as a matter of routine procedure, have received a three-day suspension at some point.

Bill No. 23, An Act to amend The Summary Offences Procedure Act, passed first reading on May 26, 1992. We didn't hold it up in the House, Mr. Speaker. If the amendment by the member from Wilkie had been in place, we could have suspended the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I have listened very carefully to the member from Souris-Cannington, and I want to remind the member of a ruling made by the former Speaker of the legislature on June 12, 1991, when it comes to repetition and also for obstruction in the legislature on work that is before the Assembly.

The Speaker made it very clear in the presentation of petitions that if a member can present the petitions and make his point by presenting more than one petition, that

that must be done. The member makes the same point on each Bill that he goes through. In fact his words are identical on each. And so I say to the member that his tactic of obstructionism at this particular time is not well taken. And the member has made his point, I think, on 22 Bills, that number, and I think we are well aware of the point that he is attempting to make. And so I ask him to move on with his debate on other points that he wishes to make.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was not trying to be obstructionist but merely to indicate . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The member knows that he cannot comment on the Speaker's decision or ruling.

(2200)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will try to make my comments brief then and to get to the point.

We in opposition feel that the amendment, as presented by the member from Wilkie, has a great deal of merit to it, that it will allow people to have an input and to allow the proceedings of this House to proceed as they should be. I read the motion again, the amended motion:

That the report not now be concurred in, but that it be referred back to the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures for further consideration of the time period over which a Bill may be suspended, and for particular consideration of a process to trigger public hearings during such a suspension of a Bill.

There are two important parts in this amendment. The first is the time period that we are dealing with. As I tried to point out in my earlier comments, a three-day suspension would merely mean that it would become routine, that it would be continuously being suspended for three days. If, though, as the amendment suggests, that a longer period of time be used to suspend a Bill, then the process would not become routine but would rather be used more judiciously and more responsibly.

The time period, Mr. Speaker, should be debated in the committee. It could be debated on the floor of the House but it should perhaps be better placed in the committee, the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures, and there to develop a consensus and a compromise — somewhere between three days and indefinite, that is currently in place for bell-ringing. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that such a compromise is possible if all members remember what happened — what they felt — in 1989, and what happened in 1992.

The second part of this amendment is the process to trigger public hearings. We already have a number of committees in place that have the ability to go out and generate public hearings. The constitutional committee has that power. The Municipal Law Committee exercised that power this past spring, over the winter. The environment committee, as proposed by the Minister of the Environment, will have that power. There is no reason, Mr. Speaker, why, if this process to trigger public hearings was in place as proposed by the amendment,

that we could not take a Bill before its particular committee that would deal with it, take it out into the public view, and allow the public to have access and to comment on it.

But the idea of limiting the process, under the report, to three days is of no benefit to an opposition, and it is in fact the opposition that is giving up the right to ring the bells. It would certainly be of benefit to a government to ram through whatever legislation they propose.

The government members that were elected prior to October 21 sat on this side of the House, and through the spring of 1989, debated quite eloquently the need to maintain the right to have the power to ring bells. And now it's somewhat ironic, Mr. Speaker, that those same members are the members who wish to remove that right. It was right then and now it is wrong, in their minds.

The amendment as proposed by the member from Wilkie, that further consideration of a time period over which a Bill may be suspended, would give some power back into the hands of opposition, that would be removed by going to the three-day suspension, as proposed by the member from Regina Churchill Downs.

But we realize that to simply hold up the Bill for an X period of time is not real productive. That at some point in time the public needs to have some input into the reason that Bill is being suspended, some input into what the Bill is about. And that is why the member from Wilkie included that consideration be given to triggering a public-hearing process.

We feel that it is very important that this take place. That not only the time period be extended in there, but also that the public hearings are an integral part of the whole process.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we are reaching a point in my comments where it's clear to the members where I feel. I feel that the amendment, as proposed by the member from Wilkie, has some very definite advantages to it, that's a very beneficial possibilities. This House needs to take the opportunity to compromise and to find a consensus in the Special Committee for Rules and Procedures, and this amendment would allow that to happen.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a motion:

That the Assembly proceed to consideration of second reading of Bill 54, An Act to amend The Farm Financial Stability Act, (No. 1).

The division bells rang from 10:08 p.m. until 10:23 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 8

Muirhead	Britton
Neudorf	Toth
Swenson	Goohsen
Boyd	D'Autremont

Nays — 23

Van Mulligen	Trew
Wiens	Sonntag
Teichrob	Flavel
Shillington	Cline
Kowalsky	Wormsbecker
Penner	Crofford
Cunningham	Stanger
Hagel	Knezacek
Murray	Keeping
Bradley	Kluz
Lorje	Renaud
Johnson	

The Speaker: — The debate will continue on the main motion and the amendment thereto.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is a pleasure for me to enter into this debate this evening to attempt to convince the government members to go along with our amendment, which would return this ridiculous measure back to the committee where it really belongs. To think that any opposition, Mr. Speaker, would be able to be considered foolish enough to sit in this House and allow such a thing to happen is just totally ridiculous. We couldn't possibly do it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — I know, Mr. Speaker, that as we debate this issue and use the parliamentary tactic of debate, that there is a good chance that some of the members of the government will in fact realize that the points we are making are reasonable and that we are making points that not only we consider important, but they themselves considered important in days gone by.

I'm absolutely convinced, Mr. Speaker, that there's a good chance that some of the back-benchers might start to agree with us. In fact, I note with some pleasure, that as we have gone through these motions to try to get the government back to work that the percentage of vote has been getting closer.

And this gives me reason to be optimistic that perhaps the government members are thinking about what we are saying and that they might in fact even change their mind and do the honourable thing and return this report back to the committee where it should have stayed to begin with, and give it that due consideration that is necessary in order for harmony to continue to exist in this House, and so that we can, in fact, do the business of this Assembly for the good of the people of this province as it was intended to be done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — It has been brought to my attention, Mr. Speaker, that folks have debated this issue before, that it's not a new thing for oppositions to find themselves having to struggle to keep the tools that they need to work with. I'm told that this has happened both at the federal level as well as other provincial levels.

And certainly I have been told and had it explained to me that people have worked for many, many hours and sometimes even days to make the points necessary to preserve these rules and to make sure that the democratic process continues to work.

We therefore are committed, Mr. Speaker, to working long and hard to bring forth the necessary arguments to convince the government that they should go along with us on this amendment. And I really think that we're starting to get through to some of them because you can see that they're starting to sit up and listen a little closer to our debate and our points, and that's interesting.

You will note that a couple of days ago, Mr. Speaker, these folks were busy heckling us and laughing almost off their seats. Tonight I noticed with pleasure that they were starting to be very quiet and listening to exactly what we had to say. And my colleague, the member from Souris-Cannington, was driving home such good, solid points that I believe that they are probably on the verge of voting for this amendment to pass.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — I am convinced, Mr. Speaker, that as time goes by the rational, intelligent approach that we take will be served and that we will win the day; that we will convince these folks to take . . .

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.