

## EVENING SITTING

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

## Non-Confidence in the Speaker

**Mr. Neudorf:** — Thank you very much. I do not rise today with any joy or anticipation in this debate. Rather I stand in my place with a great sorrow and a true sense of foreboding that this motion has become necessary. Let it be clear that Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition did not want this motion to come before this Assembly. Let it also be recorded that there has not been one member of the opposition that has not agonized over the burden that this motion represents.

I have had many meetings with you in the hope of avoiding this aspect of the process, and we have both known and spoken freely that it could come to this. At every opportunity, at every step, the opposition has tried to provide options that would have allowed this Assembly an honourable way out of this situation. We have met at length and debated at length, and it is with a heavy heart that I must report that, to a member, the official opposition have informed me that their confidence in the Speaker has been permanently damaged.

We waited for the Speaker to make some statement, to give some indication, that he would act to try to restore faith that the opposition must have in its presiding officer.

And in fairness, it must be recorded that he did have options. When he first intervened so dramatically, we acquiesced because he indicated that he would convene the Rules Committee to come to an agreeable solution to the problems confronting this House. And we applauded the wisdom of that decision and I have gone on record to that effect. But within hours the same Speaker was on the television screens of the province undermining the very healing we had thought he was trying to accomplish, insisting that he would unilaterally call the committee and force an early decision.

Even then we did not move on our eroded lack of confidence at that point; we held out hope. As recently as Thursday I made it clear, and it was reported that the opposition was not committed irrevocably to this course of action. We held out hope that the Speaker would move to save the independence of the Chair. We earnestly waited for him to announce that as forceful as he was in demanding a resolution that injured the interests of the opposition before the Rules Committee, he would likewise insist that renewed committee meetings would be held to equally quickly find a suitable balancing mechanism for the damage that had been done.

Our hopes went unanswered and we are here today, I say again, with no joy in our hearts, let me assure you about that.

It is a serious issue we debate here this day. And the Leader of the NDP (New Democratic Party) has made it clear that his NDP MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) support the Speaker they elected. Therefore

we know full well that we have no chance of succeeding in this vote of confidence. We can only hope to persuade the member for Saskatoon Nutana of the real and grave consequences of a refusal to take action in his own right as an hon. member.

Some difficult things are going to be said tonight. They are not meant to be taken in a personal context. They may on the face of it appear to be hurtful, and they are not intended to hurt. These things need to be said because this institution cannot function if both sides of the House cannot have confidence in the impartiality of the Speaker and the independence of his actions and of his office. And the real truth is that no matter what conclusions government MLAs, the media, or even the public may draw from these proceedings, it is a fact that the official opposition has lost its ability to have confidence in the Speaker.

I say again, it brings me nothing but regret that I must now proceed to lay the argument as best as I can that brings us to the conclusion that we can no longer have trust in a presiding officer.

We acknowledge, I acknowledge, I know that it is a lonely and that it is a demanding position. I know a little bit about it because I was there — in a subservient role but as a presiding officer during those hectic days of the spring session of 1987.

I made a decision at that time that I was here as a politician. I was here because of my partisan nature, and I did not want to give up my partisanship as a politician. And I felt at that time that I could not fulfil a dual role to be here as a political member for the constituency of Rosthern, and at the same time sit as a presiding officer within this Assembly.

And I asked the Premier of the day to remove me from that post so that I would be able to do due diligence to what I thought was important as a member for the constituency of Rosthern, and gave up the position of a presiding officer within this Assembly.

The final intervention that removed from Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition the ability to hold full confidence in the Speaker came, of course, on July 16. On that day the Speaker intervened with the second of his unprecedented statements in the midst of a division. In that statement he set out a review of the situation that did not accord with reality. Rather the Speaker's actions resulted in the protection of the NDP government and not the defence of this institution.

I will deal with his July 16 ruling in some detail now. He opened by stating that his primary responsibility is to support the parliamentary process, yet his action again did not support his words. The parliamentary process does not include only the right of the NDP majority to have its way with this Assembly, but also the inherent right of this Assembly itself.

The protection of the parliamentary process necessarily means the protection of the non-partisan nature of the process and the faithful application of the commonly

agreed upon rules. The Speaker, cognizantly, in his statement informs the public that it is entirely within the rules for the government to implore . . . or to impose closure to stop all debate. And the record shows that the Speaker went out of his way to legitimate the government's use of this tool. Yet the Speaker did not inform the public that there is no rule, no practice, no provision of any kind, allowing any statement or speech in the midst of a division by any two members.

What the Speaker did was against the rules, dotted throughout Beauchesne's, that there can be no interruption of a division. He did not benefit the public with that information. Only the perspectives that happened to serve the interests of the NDP were referenced in his statement. It is there for all to read.

The Speaker broke the rules when he issued a ruling in the midst of the division itself.

Further, in his rulings the Speaker makes repeated reference to his political position, that it is the opposition that is obstructing the business of the Assembly. He does not inform the public or give any weight to the simple fact that the NDP government is in full and complete control of the legislative agenda and has the ability to call any item of business it chose. This is a simple, a clear, and incontrovertible fact.

The government could have called tax legislation, farm Bills, Justice Bills, any of the some 60 Bills that were on the agenda. And if it had chosen to do so, business of the Assembly would have continued uninterrupted, unimpeded.

The simple fact is the government knew from the public statements of the Speaker — and possibly from avenues unknown to us, but particularly from public statements of the Speaker — that the Speaker would intervene on behalf of the government should it choose to stall the business of the Assembly.

It is equally accurate to assign responsibility for the disruption in business to the government as it is to assign it to the opposition. The opposition indicated repeatedly that it would facilitate any other business in a reasonable way if the government simply called other business forward.

With the sure knowledge of the support of the Speaker, the government did not have to make that choice. It could sit back and allow it to happen. And the Speaker did not include that bit of balance in his statement, only implied condemnation of the opposition.

In his July 16 statement, the Speaker also stated, and I quote, the normal rule change process was followed. The normal rule process was followed. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is simply not true — absolutely not.

The truth is that as soon as the Speaker had completed his first major intervention in the lawful proceedings of this Assembly, he then took it upon himself to undermine the normal rule change process. How? By immediately ordering a meeting of the Rules Committee — an immediate meeting of the Rules Committee. And that, for

the benefit of the public, has never been done before — absolutely never in this legislature.

(1915)

All committees of this Assembly meet after consultation among all parties to ensure that each is prepared. That prior agreement is even more important when it relates to the basic, the fundamental, operating rules of this House. The Speaker decided he had the right to dispense with such an agreement and deny the opposition the time to prepare. He has argued that there have been many meetings and so all parties should have been prepared.

But again, that amounts to a self-serving approach. The fact is that previous meetings of that committee did not deal in any depth with bell-ringing and what might have been substituted for the elimination of bell-ringing. We as a committee — and I was a member of that committee — we as a committee sat down and we agreed to disagree. We agreed that for the benefit of this legislature, for the benefit of the rules and some of the good that could come out of them, that we would put aside this potentially contentious issue of bell-ringing so that it would not impede the other good work that we could arrive at by consensus.

The fact that the committee, allowed to operate normally, could function successfully is proven by the fact that we have operated under rule changes that were unanimously adopted, and have functioned reasonably well over the past 48 days, this 48-day trial period that we're operating under.

But let us be clear how far off the normal rule change process the Speaker took that committee. Not only did he force instant meetings, he arbitrarily decided that three meetings was enough to draw a conclusion. This compares very inadequately to the many meetings that led to the consensus to try the new rules that we have before this House now and which are, sadly, due to become part of the losses accounted to this sorry situation in but two days time.

The fact is, and let the record be very clear about this, the fact is that this Speaker came to that final meeting with its report all ready written. He arrived with a completed report, assuming he knew the outcome of the meeting. Now that supersedes normal process for expediency's sake. The process that is normal, the process of a committee report being written in consultation and agreement among committee members was utterly disregarded. The opposition has no choice but to believe that he did in fact know the outcome beforehand.

Let history record that the public was misinformed and that this Assembly was misinformed when in the July 16 statement he said the normal rule process had been followed. It had not.

The Speaker continued this misinterpretation of the situation in a paragraph that follows the above-noted quote. He claims that members argued that prolonged bell-ringing is justified to prevent the government from introducing or passing objectionable legislation, and that therefore the end justifies the means. By its

incompleteness this statement is also not accurate.

The opposition — and I want to be clear about this — the opposition held and continues to hold that prolonged bell-ringing is itself unacceptable. What is unacceptable about it is that it stops all business of the Assembly rather than impeding the one pernicious and illegal action that the NDP is trying to perpetuate and to impose on the public through this legislature.

It was and is our position that another mechanism is needed. We state that with a government absolutely unwilling to negotiate a different mechanism that the opposition has no choice but to use the only tool available to it — bell-ringing.

But that does not equal an argument that we find it acceptable. To conclude so would be equivalent to arguing that a doctor endorses amputation of a limb for infection. A doctor — and there are some in this House — would agree a doctor will choose to treat the infection with antibiotics not the ultimate amputation.

And the opposition chooses to treat tyrannical measures with public hearings, not bell-ringing. That is our first request. And the government refuses us that option. With the refusal, the infection becomes so serious that there is no option available and bell-ringing must be used.

Moreover, the bell-ringing on an adjournment motion is different in substance and implication from bell-ringing on a substantive motion. To avoid an adjournment motion, all the NDP would have had to do was to call on a different item of business.

Instead it made it plain that it would move to close off debate come low or high tide, and nothing anyone could do would prevent it from denying debate in this Assembly. Why not? They knew their Speaker would intervene on their behalf. That was a stated fact. They knew the Speaker would intervene on their behalf. And faithfully, as the NDP MLAs expected, he did just that.

The opposition sought and does seek different means. We seek the means of public hearings to accomplish an acceptable end. This Speaker dismissed this in his statement and continued to emphasize what amounted to a condemnation of the opposition. He can surely not expect in such circumstances to continue in the Chair with the full support of the opposition. He concludes that paragraph by saying, other parliamentary means remain for the opposition to fight the NDP.

But let's look at what he is saying and see what it's worth. This NDP government is the first one in the entire history of Saskatchewan, and perhaps the Commonwealth, to impose closure only after five days of debate, five days of debate. Five simple days of debate and the Acting House Leader moves to stifle that debate.

So clearly the tool of the filibuster is taken away. In fact it was on this very point, this very closing of debate, that we had the Speaker intervene to force a vote. Imagine if you can a Speaker intervening to ensure that debate is killed dead. That is what we find too astonishing for words. A Speaker whose sworn duty is to protect debate intervenes

claiming he is doing so precisely for that reason. But the consequences still are to close debate.

In as many public appearances, the Speaker has repeatedly stated that what his objection about bell-ringing is that it stops debate. But he will intervene at the same time to ensure that debate is in fact stopped, and to try to salvage something, he makes a point of stating that shutting down debate is within the rules. But he does not acknowledge the equal fact that until his intervention, bell-ringing was also within the rules.

The Speaker goes on then to justify his unprecedented actions by claiming his intervention was needed to ensure that the House could conduct business. As shown earlier, I think this is artful nonsense, quite frankly. That the House was not conducting business was a decision entirely of the NDP government's choice. The NDP chose not to call any other business than its closure motion.

Now a motion on closure can hardly be called pressing when there are over 60 Bills to deal with and almost 30 estimates to consider and to debate. The government had the power and the choice to call any estimate on any Bill but it chose instead to press a closure motion with the sure knowledge that the Chair would come to their aid. This cannot stand as an honourable decision of this Assembly. And the Speaker that prosecuted this overthrow of the parliamentary order cannot remain the presiding officer of this Assembly.

Even if this case was an isolated one, even if it was so isolated, it is so serious that the Speakership will be impaired by the continued incumbency of the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

The fact is that the most recent intervention is not isolated. Other interventions have not been as decisive in favour of the NDP government and so the opposition has been able to accept some interference. But for the record, it is important to highlight some of the examples of interference that have added to our, the opposition's, inability as a member to hold confidence in the presiding officer.

Earlier in this session the Speaker chastised one of our members for getting the name of a constituency wrong. Now such a mistake, particularly after a recent reshuffling of names and seats following the election, is properly overlooked.

Almost immediately after question period was interrupted . . . Almost immediately after that, question period was interrupted so that the Speaker could chastise a member of the opposition and in the process throw off the member's line of questioning. Right after that, the Speaker, as some of us will recall, made the same error in identifying constituencies.

Now imagine the rudeness and the outrage that would have been emanated from members opposite if we had chosen to chastise the Speaker on that same transgression. It would never have happened.

Further disruptions of question period have been common. Early on the Speaker tried to tell the opposition

what kind of questions it could or could not ask. It was apparent to us from the opposition perspective that he was remembering his days as an NDP cabinet minister when he sat down the member for Morse and instructed him that his questions were too precise and that they should be asked in estimates. We let that go, formally, but informally it was made known that the Speaker has no right to answer for a minister. If a minister wants to deflect a question to estimates, that's his or her right. But it has never been the practice in this Assembly for the Speaker to determine what kind or nature of questions the opposition can ask during question period.

Indeed, when the the current Speaker was the opposition member for Saskatoon South, *Hansard* reflects many detailed, specific questions about post-secondary funding and private school accreditation from him. The Speaker of the day did not take it on himself to order the member from Saskatoon South to get off that line of questioning and to save it for estimates. That would have brought objections loud and continuous from the member from Saskatoon South — and I might add, he would have been correct in objecting. Those interventions by the current Speaker were interpreted by members on this side as part of an interference to supply the NDP minister an out from answering the questions.

(1930)

Also in question period, the Speaker has chastised various members for entering debate. Yet the answers of the ministers are clearly recorded as argumentative and engaging in debate.

The Speaker has ignored or repudiated the unique nature of our Assembly. In the process, balance has been lost. And I say to all hon. members that while the Speaker talks about this being the only Assembly that allowed unlimited bell-ringing — and I want you folks to take notice of this — that this was the only Assembly that allowed unlimited bell-ringing, he misses the point that this Assembly is also unique in many other ways; that a balance exists and that by his unilateral action that balance has been upset.

For example, while other assemblies have removed unlimited bell-ringing — that's a fact — they have also created other effective tools of opposition to replace that bell-ringing. In other legislatures there are various tools such as more readily obtaining public hearings. In Ontario, also with an NDP government, for the first time the government agreed to allow a budget, the entire actual budget, to go to public hearings. Now that's a powerful tool. That's a powerful tool to exchange for bell-ringing.

In other jurisdictions the opposition is given the right to select which estimates will be called when. They have that right. In other jurisdictions private members are given more power in committees, and especially in the Rules Committee. In other jurisdictions there has been some balance maintained, and more importantly, the Speaker has always been acutely aware of the need for him or her to remove any hint of partisanship activities.

Now the person who sat in the throne in this very

Assembly prior to this conducted himself in line with those traditions, and it was not an approach that won him friends in the government caucus, I can assure you. As an example, the former Speaker would not make a regular habit of lunching or dining with government members, and when he did he made sure that there was a member of the opposition present. Now I know some of you are thinking, well boy that sounds kind of petty — but it is a matter of substance in a position of trust.

For example, this Speaker told us that he was receiving unending phone calls demanding he intervene. While I will not challenge the truth of that assertion, the only way that happened, in my estimation, is if the NDP members orchestrated such calls, and the Speaker is an experienced enough politician, I would suggest, to be able to pick that up.

Sir Moses Finley said this of democracy:

Democracy is exactly what the word means etymologically — rule by the *Demos*, the people: the people themselves make the decisions.

Considering what has happened in this Assembly, I would suggest that Mr. Finley would have added, except in Saskatchewan. For the Speaker has ruled that even if his intervention means certainly, and without doubt, that in two weeks, in two weeks time, the NDP government will have the absolute power to remove the right of the people to seek redress in the courts, even if that is not the case, his purpose is not to serve the democracy and therefore he can rule as he wishes.

And the fact is that there is nothing to prevent a Speaker from doing anything — literally anything he chooses — so long as he maintains the support of the majority members of this House on the government side.

Now the Leader of the NDP has made it clear in the media that his party is very satisfied with the Premier's chosen Speaker. And therefore the Speakership will remain in its current status, unless the member from Nutana can come to grips with the situation honourably and step aside.

And I say this to the Speaker: even if you believe in your heart of hearts that you have not acted in a partisan way, even if you believe that what you have done is the right thing under the rules, the fact is that the official opposition regrettably cannot have confidence in you.

It's a very . . . the most serious and the most difficult thing to say, the things that I am saying today. But they have to be said. It is tragic that it has come to this. But we feel as an opposition that we have no choice. There have been simply too many interventions that have taken us beyond the point that we can feel that the Chair is being conducted in a fair-handed and non-partisan way.

Perhaps that is simply an inevitability, when a Speaker tries to modernize a legislature, when there is not bipartisan consent to that process. There must be bipartisan consent to the process. And whatever the cause, the House cannot be honourably presided over by a Speaker that does not enjoy the confidence of both sides of the House.

That we are not by nature obstructionist, and that this motion is not simply another means of obstruction, should be clear from the dispatch in which things are being done on a routine basis in this House. In the course of such business, the position of the Speaker of the routine business is not critical, because the business is not particularly critical.

But I put it to this Assembly that when further, as there will be, that when further, highly controversial legislation is put before the Assembly, how can the opposition be expected to be effective? And this is not a trivial concern.

The government, we know, is considering dramatic and very Draconian labour legislation as an example. We know that presentations have been made that would force, for example, every farm-hand in the province to join the Grain Services Union.

What about when the government comes forward with a total restructuring of health care in the province? What if their Minister of Rural Development, that we'll be hearing about later on tonight, exercises the power he wishes to take unto himself to unilaterally eliminate the rural municipal system of government?

These are very basic, highly controversial proposals that absolutely demand a trusted Speaker. The fact is the opposition did not wake up one day and say we choose not to have confidence in the Speaker. Confidence either exists or it doesn't exist. We deeply wish that it were otherwise. But there is no such confidence and that is a situation that cannot remain unresolved.

Simply put, regrettably put, for the sake of the institution, it is my humble belief that the member for Nutana must go back to being exactly that, the member for Nutana.

And so therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this Assembly, in view of the unprecedented action of Mr. Speaker in his direct refusal to abide by the rules of this Assembly and his subordination of the rights of the House to the will of the NDP government, resolves that it no longer has any confidence in its presiding officer.

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have thought carefully about this motion, and I made a courtesy call to you, Mr. Speaker, to inform you of my intentions. I'll now share this information with the members of this Assembly.

After sitting in this House as a participant and an observer, and as the only person who can understand what it is like to be isolated while trying to learn and understand a new role, I've watched as Mr. Speaker has presided over the workings of this Assembly, most often with fairness, at times in an exemplary fashion, and yes, on a few occasions making judgements with which I did not agree. However, it is my opinion that any individual in the position of Speaker will make errors from time to time, hopefully not making the same one twice.

I do have faith in the member of Saskatoon Nutana as Mr.

Speaker, and in his work in this Assembly. I say this in spite of my concern regarding first, his speaking to the media; and second, his decision to call the Rules and Procedures Committee to expedite changes to the rules mid-session. It is in his position as chair of the Rules and Procedures Committee that I believe Mr. Speaker has a conflict of interest, and should reconsider holding the chairmanship of this committee.

Over all I remain unconvinced that any individual would preside over this House any better than the member from Saskatoon Nutana, given the divisiveness and the disrespect between the government members and the official opposition.

It is evident that the time has come for all members of this Assembly to create a better environment in which we can carry out the work of the people of this province. Instead of placing all of the responsibility and criticism at the feet of the Speaker, we should behave more responsibly, and perhaps we would become the beneficiaries of a less critical public. I think the time is for us to do our part. Thank you.

**Mr. Kowalsky:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the 1700s the great British philosopher Edmund Burke has this to say about parliaments. He said, and I quote:

"Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests. Parliament is a deliberate assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where not local purposes ought to guide, but the general good resulting from the general reason of the whole. You may choose a private member, but he is a member of parliament."

Parliament is an assembly with one interest, one meaning, main interest, and that is that of the whole, not local. Good words, profound words, wise words, and as true now as they were then, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is more in sorrow than outrage that I join this debate. I regret having to take part in debating this motion because, by doing so, in some small way it gives it credibility.

I regret having to take part because, and here I quote again:

What this debate is about is the defence of this institution — this parliament, its officers, its traditions and its rules of conduct.

These were the words spoken during a similar debate in this House 12 years ago by one of the most respected members to sit in this Assembly, Mr. Auburn Pepper from Weyburn.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, debating this motion is sad because it means we are defending an institution which really should need no defence. But to let it pass unchallenged would be to yield, as Burke said, to local prejudices and to local interests.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the shortest way to reply to this

motion is to make reference to that similar motion submitted by a Conservative opposition in 1980. The names in that debate are well-known in this House and to the Saskatchewan public. Let me just take a moment to run through them. John Brockelbank, now retired; Eric Berntson, now a senator; Graham Taylor, now retired; Auburn Pepper is deceased; Doug McArthur has moved from the province; Allan Blakeney has retired from public office and teaching at the University of Saskatchewan. Those are the members who debated a motion of non-confidence in the Speaker on April 29, 1980. They are gone but the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and the office of the Speaker are still here.

(1945)

The institution of parliament was challenged for reasons, I venture to say, that no one here remembers. However, the office of the Speaker, with its responsibility, with its power, with its lonely majesty, is still here. Sometimes in the hurly-burly of daily discussion in this Assembly we forget the long view.

Now I bring up this historical precedent for a particular reason. The reason for the challenge to Speaker Brockelbank is now unclear. In fact, even rereading *Hansard* on this debate, the reasons are still unclear. Presumably the passions and machinations and the tensions of the day led the then opposition to decide, in its wisdom, to mount the challenge.

Speaker Brockelbank survived the challenge because his position, in addition to his reputation as a fair and impartial dispenser of legislative justice, far outweighed the supposed grievances of the particular moment. And when the day is over again, I am sure the same sense will remain.

This current challenge started supposedly over one issue — GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) — and thereby lies its flaw. If the opposition wants to debate GRIP, it should debate GRIP. This kind of back-door transference or projection of one issue on to another is an approach that I'm sure a psychologist could explain. As a psychological aberration it makes some sense. As a parliamentary procedure it is demeaning. And the public of Saskatchewan knows that.

If the opposition prefers to reserve their right to challenge and personally attack the Speaker every time it disagrees on a single issue, we would have a new Speaker every week. That I think will not serve this Assembly or the public good.

I've heard it said, Mr. Speaker, that the first Speakers selected in England were somewhat reluctant to look at the job as an honour. Often the Speaker feared for his head. And the reason for this was because the Speaker was the one who carried the message; he was the messenger of the people's representatives. He carried it to the ruling monarch for implementation and the ruling monarch did not always like the message. The king did not always respect the duty of parliament to the whole and not the local. I would have hoped, Mr. Speaker, that in our present system the security of the position of Mr. Speaker would not be at stake.

Now this motion is especially vexatious because it is levelled at an elected Speaker, one that all parties of this Assembly agreed to. Now the opposition wants to change its vote. Should we go back to the old rules whereby the government appointed the Speaker? That too would not serve the evolution of our parliamentary Assembly.

To quote Burke again:

Nothing in progression can rest on its original plan. We may as well think of rocking a grown man in the cradle of an infant.

This institution consisting of human beings is fluid. It evolves. It works within strong traditions. It adapts itself to circumstances. With the elected Speaker, with the new rules, with many other policy changes we have been keeping ourselves relevant.

Now with this motion the opposition wants to prolong its griping about GRIP. That won't do, because there are expectations of us as parliamentarians, that we must balance our partisan causes for the common good. Our responsibility is, as Burke said, for the whole, not only the local.

Mr. Speaker, there are members in this Assembly who have served with distinction for a number of years — our Premier, the member from Arm River, the Minister of Finance to name a few — and they have served under a number of Speakers, both in government and in opposition. I dare say they have not always agreed with the decisions of the Speaker at the moment, but the business of the House carried on because they recognized that what matters is the pattern of decision making that is shown over a long period.

Now during this session I have been tempted to question a ruling or two by Mr. Speaker. I questioned them into myself because it's apparent that during this session — Mr. Speaker's first session — Mr. Speaker has been fair, even-handed, some say stern, but impartial.

And impartial a Speaker must be. He has shown by his actions and his rulings that his concern for parliament is for parliament, not for himself and certainly not for a party. He has shown responsibility for the whole and not for the local. To suggest otherwise is small. The public agrees with the Speaker's action. And I dare say even the ever-vigilant members of the press agree.

There are other points to argue but they are redundant to the main point. I can mention, for instance, that every other legislature in Canada, including the House of Commons, has restrictions on bell-ringing more stringent than ours. But that's not the point.

The point here is that Mr. Speaker, acting by his own counsel and with the guidance of the ages of tradition he represents, made a ruling in the interests of parliamentary democracy. He performed his role. And now we play ours.

As Burke said, our responsibility is to the whole, not only to the local. Bringing forward this motion is an affront. To

support it would be an abdication. I therefore ask all members of this Assembly to soundly defeat this motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Swenson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is not with a great deal of pleasure that I stand in this Assembly this evening to speak to the motion that my colleague from Rosthern has brought to this Chamber. The more years that one sits in this Chamber, the more appreciation, I think, one develops for the process that we as parliamentarians go through, a process that is very trying, but one that is necessary.

My seven years-plus in this Assembly pales as compared to many other members who have served in this Assembly. It certainly pales, sir, in number of years to the service that you have put into this Chamber. Those seven years-plus have been extraordinary times in our province. They have been times of trial and tribulation for nearly everyone in this province no matter what their occupation, no matter what their status in life, no matter what they as Saskatchewan people do on a daily basis.

The 1980s particularly were not easy. Governing has not been easy. And by that the way that this Assembly operates has not been easy. Politics and politicians have probably never been under greater stress than they are today to maintain some type of honourable profile with the citizens that they are charged to represent.

Reform of our process and along with it our Assembly, are high on the public's agenda. I think that is why that all members of this Assembly felt that it was a logical step in the right direction when this Assembly elected its Speaker for the very first time. And that election resulted in the member from Saskatoon Nutana becoming the elected Speaker of this Chamber.

Because the public cynicism at the perception that politicians simply play partisan games meant that change has to occur, that public expectation that everyone will do better, they will do more, and that they will do it for less, comes right home to roost in this Assembly.

And it means that each and every one of us have to stop and re-evaluate our role in life as an elected member of this Assembly perhaps more often than we did in the past. People are clearly saying out there today that partisanship as is applied by political parties in this province and this country have gone too far in many cases. And that that partisanship is getting us into a very uncomfortable position as the people who are entrusted with the management of our democratic process.

We have been faced, Mr. Speaker, as you know, in the last few years with issues that have tested this Assembly as it has never been tested before. The other day in debate the Premier outlined a whole host of times and areas when this Assembly was put to the test, when members had to look inside themselves and look deeply.

And he was correct. This Assembly stood through the 1930s, the most awful depression that our country has ever seen, with questions of substance. And at that time it stayed together. This Assembly stood in the face of the

debate on medicare which was tearing our province asunder, which had thousands of people on the steps on this legislature. And through all of that people were able to look in themselves and dig deep and fend off those desires to short-circuit this process.

Those solutions as we know it are not easy, and the confidence must be restored — it has to be restored or this profession will lose what honour it has left. And this House must rethink the process that it has gone through.

Mr. Speaker, I think the member from P.A. (Prince Albert) in his remarks just now has somewhat trivialized the debate that went on in this Assembly, the debate that was involved in the bell-ringing motion, the issue of closure, and yes, ultimately, the issue of GRIP. Because these are all symptoms of what has been coming on in this House over a number of years.

In all honesty, Mr. Speaker, in that debate on rule change — a rule change that I say to you, sir, was fraught from the beginning, as outlined by the member from Rosthern, because the process was not legitimate — during the course of the debate on rule change, the debate was closed with closure before even all of a small, 10-member caucus had spoken in this Assembly. Not a caucus of 20 or a caucus of 25, but a caucus of 10 had spoken on this issue.

It was read into the record of this Assembly day after day, some of the most eloquent defence of the democratic process that I have ever heard in a British parliamentary system. It was delivered by the member from Rosemont and the member from Saskatoon Broadway and the member from Prince Albert, and indeed, sir, it was delivered by the member from Saskatoon South in 1989.

(2000)

Some of the most eloquent defence ever probably heard in parliaments across this land was delivered by the New Democratic Party caucus in this province on the question of the limitation of bell-ringing to one hour. And it seemed very appropriate in this debate in 1992 that that defence that was so heartfelt, that was so strong, that obviously meant so much to so many members of this Assembly, should be read back into the record and that the same feelings should apply.

And that is why I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that this was absolutely the wrong time in our history, both as a parliament and as the stewards of the political process in this province, for even the slightest hint of partisanship to be displayed by the presiding officer of this House.

The arguments made by the House Leader of our caucus are very succinct in outlining a process that would lead to no other conclusion, a process that simply said the government's agenda must be followed at all cost. Never before in the history of this province, our country, and indeed maybe beyond that, on the question of substantive motions, have rulings been made in this manner.

Today as I was reviewing my remarks, I happened to read a line from the Hon. Jeanne Sauv , the Speaker of the House of Commons about a decade ago, where she

clearly outlined to the members of that Assembly the process on substantive motions and the right of the opposition to obstruct.

And I would say to you, sir, that rule is as valid today in the House of Commons as it was then. There have been reforms. There have been modifications. There have been changes in the way that that process works. And that process works because those modifications were arrived at through a form of consensus and agreement amongst all parties of the House of Commons.

There was no ramrodding. There was no hurry-up offence. There was no ultimatum delivered in that process. And you, sir, nor anyone else in this Assembly, cannot tell me that at the end of the day if that process had been made to work properly, that the idea of unlimited bell-ringing would have become history in this province, that the opposition would have been confident that it had enough tools at hand through some changes as outlined by the member from Rosthern, as through changes that have been outlined by other members of this Assembly, the member from Greystone, that at the end of the day that balance would have still been here and would have been achieved. And this House would have been proceeding in a normal and regular fashion.

And instead, we are faced with this debate tonight. We are faced with a very large majority government and a very small opposition, a small opposition that does not have the tools that other jurisdictions have — and will not have them — an opposition that does not hold a very powerful weapon in its arsenal to use against a government that seems to indicate to citizens in its province that it can break the law of our land, that it can deny a day in court, that it can retroactively break contracts at will.

I say to you, sir, those are very strong, strong methods to govern by. And they require very strong, strong alternatives to oppose by. And now the official opposition is faced with the prospect of being in a Chamber that has, in my view, sir, desecrated that process that we are all the stewards of. And it is very difficult to fulfil the obligations vested upon me by the people of Thunder Creek in that climate.

And it is for that reason, sir, that I support the member from Rosthern in his motion, as my caucus does. And I say to you, sir, there are very few chances left for this Assembly, and it is going to take a lot of courage by a few individuals to right the wrong that has been done in this Assembly. Thank you.

**Mr. Devine:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few comments this evening with respect to the events in the past few weeks. I want to phrase my comments around a question: how should this Legislative Assembly debate something like retroactive legislation and breaking a contract, breaking a law? Should this place debate it one-sided, should it debate it efficiently, or maybe should it debate it slowly and painfully and indeed inefficiently.

And I use those words for a reason, Mr. Speaker, because I can recall being in a conversation in this Legislative

Assembly with the premier before I was premier. Allan Blakeney said to me one time, democracy is not designed to be efficient; it's designed to be democratic and sometimes it can be very inefficient and very slow and it can be costly because people need to feel like they have been heard.

And as an economist I found that an interesting statement. And the more I thought about it, the more I acknowledged that he was correct, because as my colleagues have pointed out, we want to debate things we feel very emotional about. And we've heard here several times, and if I go back and look at the debates in 1989, public opinion feels very sensitive about some things, very sensitive.

Sometimes politicians can lather up the support of public opinion about certain things, as the New Democrats did in SaskEnergy, and obviously as we do and others do with respect to farm legislation where tens of thousands of families feel like they, number one, want the right to choose what their crop insurance looks like; number two, want the right to go to court before the law; and number three, the public in any polling that you do or we do will tell you the public believes the farmer should have his day in court, and it does not believe that this government should retroactively rewrite the history and deemed to have done it one way when we know it didn't do another. And they want that debated, not efficiently, not one-sided, not in one particular way, but they want it aired, and they want it so they can feel that their members have had an opportunity to speak openly and as often as possible and passionately because these people feel passionate.

I can tell you without any exaggeration, if you think that they felt passionate about bonds or shares in Energy, they feel passionate about their farms, and they feel passionate about the stress that they're going through. And they feel passionate about their bankers and their accountants and their lawyers and their contracts and their kids and their families. And when you change that retroactively, they feel passionate about that. Honestly.

And they're not looking for an efficient Assembly that could get it done quick. And they think, oh, weren't they really on the mark and they had a couple of questions and it's all over and it runs so effectively and efficiently and they passed 15 Bills Tuesday by 4 o'clock. That isn't what they're looking for. They're looking for democracy because the strength of our system is that you can stand in this Legislative Assembly and you can speak for the people you represent with passion, and you can do it again, and you will have the respect of members opposite, even if you have a small opposition and certainly note that both parties know what that is about. All three parties know what that is about. And you can do it because you respect the process. You get elected, somebody else gets elected, but when you are elected you represent your people and you are proud to do that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, why we're on our feet here tonight is we've been cut off. We've been unilaterally denied the right to speak passionately at length about things that our people and your people and people throughout the province feel very, very serious about. And it is so ironic,



Mr. Speaker, and I've got these lists of your speeches and other speeches that the members made. It's so ironic and I think difficult for members opposite and all of us to have the first elected New Democratic Speaker to participate in this non-democratic activity where people are denied the right to speak on behalf of their constituents.

As my colleague and seat mate said here, it's going to take courage to allow the public to know that we can respond in an open, democratic way.

We've even asked, could we just take this Agriculture Committee — there's the standing committee of this Legislative Assembly — and take it to the people. Take it to the people. Let them speak about this thing that involves their life and about retroactivity. And of course, the government doesn't want to spend money on farmers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I can go back and I can read your speeches, and I've almost got them memorized here where you said, why doesn't the government deal with the real issues rather than the rules. Why don't you deal with helping farmers; they're in a crisis.

Well here we are — how ironic, Mr. Speaker — with a New Democratic government, a New Democratic MLA elected as a Speaker, cut off debate about helping farmers. In '89, for Heaven's sakes, he was talking about the crisis then and the crisis is a multiple today and tonight of what it was then — a multiple, the worst since the Depression; in some cases, a magnitude of threefold on the Depression in terms of we have the technology, but we are losing families and farms and stress and people leaving. And it's extremely difficult.

And a New Democratic Party and a New Democratic government and a New Democratic MLA elected by this Legislative Assembly sits in the Chair and says: no more debate about farmers. We are going to retroactively change their life. You can't debate that any more because it's not efficient. The Legislative Assembly would not be efficient, would not be effective, if we let people debate. There isn't a Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that you can think of, who would think of tens of thousands of families don't warrant public debate when they've signed for three years on the line because they need help.

Yesterday, the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan asked for more and more money to help farmers. We can only believe that he knows that there's a crisis.

Mr. Speaker, that's why we're in this debate this evening. We have the right to debate. And in democracy if you're denied the right to debate and stick up for the people that you believe in and the principles you believe in, then once you get elected, you don't need an opposition whether with five or six or ten or eight as you had, or none. You don't need them.

(2015)

They can filibuster for a while. They can do a little bit of this, little bit of that, and you just have your way, and then we'll wait until the next election. But that isn't the way it's been designed, that isn't the way it's run. That isn't the way it's protected people's rights and gotten all of us

interested in public life to come in and say, I believe in the system. I'll run and lose; I'll run and win.

And we've all done that. I think I've lost three times and won three times. But I respect the system because it allows me to speak up for the people that I believe in. And we don't always agree. But that's changed now. And it's on the basis that we're going to be efficient; we're going to be effective. And the government has to get on with its business.

Well it's too partisan, Mr. Speaker. It's too partisan for this place to work with genuine respect because we no longer have those rights, and all the rights that you had, Mr. Speaker, and the rights that the opposition had when they were here. And they were eight. And they wanted those rights to stick up for the things that they believed in. And they're gone.

I don't have the time . . . maybe some other time, we could read all your, as my seat mate said, all your eloquent speeches about democracy. How good they were. How good they are. How relevant they always are. Changing the rules in the middle of the ball game — great analogy. Start the game; don't like the way its going, so you change the rules. You can't do that. Nobody get involved with it. And you don't expect that to happen here, particularly by people who say we are the New Democrats of North America.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this small opposition in this particular legislature is just experiencing the sadness of the loss of a vitality of this great Legislative Assembly. Great debates. Great debates. Very lively, imaginative, colourful personalities have been in this Legislative Assembly and hopefully will be for hundreds of years to come.

But we have changed those rules unilaterally at a time when you say, well we got to be more efficient, more effective. I know that farmers are in trouble but we got to do it differently. And we'll do it even if it means breaking the law and if we can't get that done, we'll break the rules; we'll change those. What a record. What a record.

So we don't like it. And we don't think it's fair. And we think you picked the wrong issue to say I will unilaterally change this because the House has to operate, because we really have to change the Bill on the farmers, because we just can't really pay them this even though we signed a contract. And therefore, if you won't let us do that, we'll have to change the rules, even though it's been there for hundreds of years. That's the way they do it. At least you'd have a committee do it and you'd have consensus, but we won't even allow that. It's just one thing after another, another and another and another. And then we've got this situation where you muzzle the wishes of people.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, I will just say that I honestly and sincerely believe Allan Blakeney was right on the money when he says democracy is not designed to be efficient. It's to be democratic. So that people feel free to express themselves uninhibited, with respect, but have the time and the capacity to stick up for their constituents, and not in the middle of a crisis which you've talked about and the Premier talks about, we've all talked about — a rural family community crisis. We retroactively

changed the Bills, we retroactively changed the law, and we muzzle the small opposition because New Democrats are afraid of an inefficient Legislative Assembly.

So if that's what it's boiled down to, we'll take it, Mr. Speaker. And we have no choice. But it's your record. It's a democratic record. The New Democrats have this on their plate. And it will be there for ever. And people aren't going to forget that. There will be other debates at other times. But imagine the precedent you set for the next government and the next government and the next government.

So, Mr. Speaker, I sincerely believe you've made an error. You've made an error in cutting off the tradition of this Legislative Assembly. You made an error particularly at a time of a crisis when we need the passion and the debate so that we can go and fight for people. And when we need openness. And again as my colleague has said, but the public wants openness and not partisanship; we need that more than ever to have this place respected.

So it's with sadness that I rise tonight to speak in this particular motion. But I have to support my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, in saying that the operation of this Legislative Assembly for the people of this province and the people of this country and in all democracies is more important than the political career of any one individual or any one government.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you. I rise tonight greatly disturbed by many of the actions taken on the part of the Speaker and therefore must support the motion of non-confidence in the Speaker of this Assembly.

When I was elected in October for the first time, I never expected to participate in this kind of debate. Although I am a new member, it is clear in whatever literature I have read, whether it be Beauchesne's, or *Parliamentary Practice*, that the position of Speaker of the House is clearly defined.

It is my understanding that a Speaker should be above the fray, above the politics, and above the cut and thrust of daily events in this House; that a Speaker must oversee the daily functioning of the House. He or she must ensure that all the rules are followed and that all members are treated equally as allowed by the rules, procedures, and traditions of over 600 years of parliamentary heritage. In fact, the 21st edition of *Parliamentary Practice* says that, and I quote:

Confidence in the impartiality of the Speaker is an indispensable condition of the successful working of procedure.

This is not a vague description. The author used the word "indispensable" when describing the confidence and impartiality of the Speaker, meaning it is essential. It is fundamental. And it is vital that a Speaker have the trust of every member. Confidence and impartiality are vital if an Assembly wishes to be successful at carrying out the wishes of the people.

I am sorry to say that this Speaker does not possess the trust of this member from Souris-Cannington. The

member for Saskatoon Nutana has on many occasions caused me to question his non-partisanship. Unfortunately, actions taken by the member for Nutana leave the official opposition with no other avenue to pursue but a non-confidence motion.

What this Assembly has seen in this spring session is anything but non-partisanship on the part of the Speaker. If this were a hockey game, the position of Speaker would be that of referee. But on this sheet of ice, that referee is cheering for the home team. It is one thing for the referee to cheer for a team when he's not on the ice; it is entirely another matter when the game is in progress and the referee uses the rules, changes the rules, or breaks the rules to ensure that the home team wins.

What this Assembly witnessed on July 16 was the Speaker changing the rules, indeed breaking the rules to ensure an NDP victory on GRIP. He did this by allowing the temporary House Leader for the government to use closure to stifle debate. The Speaker allowed the government to use closure to shut up a mere 10 opposition members. Shut them up after they had only spoken for five days.

After reviewing the history of the bell-ringing debate in 1989, the NDP filibustered for 28 days. The Speaker of the day did not intervene. Closure was not used. The government did not proceed because there was no consensus.

Closure was not necessary in this debate, and not only because it only extended for five days, but because the government had many chances and many compromises offered to them by the opposition. They chose none of them, because they knew they could persuade their Speaker to do the dastardly deed of stifling the opposition for them.

The government did not have to compromise on their retroactive GRIP Bill because the Speaker of the House would compromise his position instead. Actually in this case the use of closure compliments the effectiveness and the ability of this opposition. And it also admits that this government is afraid to give the people of Saskatchewan their day in court without rigging the game. It is easy to win when you have bought off the referee.

I cannot hold confidence in an individual who has abused his position as the presiding officer of this Assembly — a non-partisan position — to further his political party's agenda. We have a place in this House for such partisanship. There is a place for the member for Nutana to practise that partisanship. That place is the back benches of the government side of the House, or a cabinet position at the pleasure of the member for Riversdale.

When the Speaker spoke to members about the number of phone calls he was receiving on the bell-ringing issue, he should have wondered where and why those calls were coming to him, and who was orchestrating them. He is an experienced politician above all. And I'm sure he was aware of what was happening. He stated he had the public on his side to intervene. In fact, what he had was pressure from his own political party. Yet he portrayed

such partisan activity as a reasonable measure for what he should do.

A Speaker's actions can never be taken based on some real or contrived public sentiment. What, I ask, if there were widespread public sentiment to deny French, or Catholics, the right to speak in this Assembly — I chose those two groups because they are of my own heritage — would a Speaker argue he had public support to deny that right, and therefore proceed to extinguish it? I would hope not.

This Speaker privately lobbied members of the official opposition, telling them that the politics of it were not right for those MLAs. How could he in any way believe that it is proper for him to do such a thing? How can a Speaker, even if he thinks he is speaking personally, try to persuade individual MLAs of a given course of action? All of these things belie his statement that he was acting narrowly on the procedural issues.

We do not believe that this Speaker is capable of engaging in the partisan isolation that is a necessary prerequisite of being Speaker. This is not a personal attack; rather, an assessment of the facts. It requires a special temperament to be Speaker, and the most important temperament is the ability to separate yourself from the politics going on in the House and to some extent in the province itself.

For example, while we have no evidence, we have come to question whether or not the new creation of executive assistants to the Speaker are being used in the service of the Assembly or in the service of the member for Saskatoon Nutana. We are suspicious that the Speaker's office is no longer itself secure and protected on behalf of all MLAs.

(2030)

Why is it necessary to create these new positions? Certainly they have never been needed in the past and we have no good explanations as to why they are needed now. Yet we are in the position where questioning them is tantamount to questioning officers of the Assembly, and we feel cornered — cornered by the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

If the Speaker of the legislature is not going to be impartial, is not going to be fair, what is the point of having a Speaker? Why not just let the government sit on one side, the opposition across the way, and let them go at it?

It is with the actions of a partisan Speaker in mind that I must say to the member for Nutana, please step down.

**Ms. Bradley:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying that as a new member of this Assembly I feel I have learned a lot about the legislative process by sitting on the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures. I have also learned much from the veteran members of the Assembly and I would therefore like to thank them for their assistance.

I have been impressed by the speech of my colleague

from Prince Albert Carlton on this debate tonight, and my colleagues' speeches last Thursday on the debate on bell-ringing.

Perhaps the most important thing that I have learned is to respect the institution of the Legislative Assembly, and that includes the role of the Speaker. Democracy is not always efficient, but it is by far the best system we can have. Understanding its principles is essential in understanding the key role the Speaker has in maintaining democracy in the legislature that we participate here today.

I would also like to recount Allan Blakeney's last speech to the legislature, as did the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow last Thursday. Blakeney's last speech to the legislature was eloquently delivered on the principles of the House. I will not quote his speech, as it has been already. But in essence I again want to highlight three principles members should keep in mind.

First is that, as MLAs, we are here to serve the people of Saskatchewan. Secondly, the legislature is first and foremost a forum of debate, where the right to speak is precious and should be provided and guaranteed. Third, the principle which says the majority must have the right to govern, and the minority must have the right to be heard.

The Speaker's role is to maintain these principles in the House. This is not an easy task and should never be regarded as easy. It goes without saying that members do not always agree. Therefore a mediator, a referee — as many of the public view this job — is elected as a Speaker. A Speaker is needed to ensure adherence to the rules and a smooth functioning of the legislative process.

There is definitely a need to keep traditions, but only if they are functional. As J. Burke said, and I quote, "A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation." The obstructionist tactics employed by the opposition have paralysed the legislature and called into question the rules of the legislature. I agree with the Speaker's statement that it is neither parliamentary nor democratic to permit continual obstruction by the use of tactics that mock the principles of this institution. A minority must not dictate the actions of the Assembly, especially after the issue has been debated. People in this province and in my constituency have told me loud and clear they want their representatives and government to be at work. Our proposed rule changes still give the opposition more generous provisions than any other opposition in this country, to ensure that the voice of the minority is heard.

As a member of the Rules Committee, I must at this time speak to some of the unfair accusations made by the members opposite. At the insistence of the people of Saskatchewan, the Speaker called a meeting of the Rules Committee. At this first meeting, discussions occurred over a length of time and finally the member from Prince Albert Carlton brought forward our proposal. The meeting was adjourned so that members from all parties could study the proposal or come up with their own. When we met the second time, no new proposals were presented, and after three hours we put forward our

proposal as a motion. There was no vote taken, so that the opposition could have time to review the motion with their caucus. The meeting was adjourned over the weekend so that opposition members would have more time to review this motion. At our third meeting, again, no amendment was put forth from the opposition and the motion was voted on in the Rules Committee.

The Speaker throughout all these meetings was impartial and fair. The Clerk had the typed motion ready at our third meeting, as the motion had been moved the meeting before. The Speaker also told us at this time he had various typed options of motions ready depending on what happened to the motion in committee. This is not partisanship; this is competency. I am appalled at the lack of integrity of members opposite to give only partial truths here tonight.

Mr. Speaker, the new rule changes represent a reasonable compromise. The opposition is allowed to ring the bells for 30 minutes and to suspend Bills for three days. These rule changes were thoroughly debated in the House and they still remain the most generous across Canada.

I must also at this time address some of the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition. A rule that limits bell-ringing is not a rule that limits debate, but rather encourages debate in the legislature. Bell-ringing ends the debate. It is a silencer. The public has clearly indicated their displeasure with perpetual bell-ringing, therefore the practice must come to an end.

The opposition claims that they are using these tactics to prevent changes to GRIP, but indications so far are that fewer farmers have opted out of GRIP '92 than new farmers who have signed up. And it goes without saying that we have not witnessed any massive rallies or mass signing of petitions over this matter. And no, what we saw was an interview of the Leader of the Opposition on a golf course. Is this an example of passion and debate and concern for the farmers in democracy?

And if I remember correctly, the opposition seemed very satisfied with the Speaker's first intervention which suspended the GRIP legislation. The government is not happy with further suspension on GRIP, but the efficacy with which a Speaker carries out his duties must be evaluated over the entire session. One cannot pick and choose. One cannot praise the Speaker at one point and then call for his resignation at another point.

We as members of this House may not and will not always agree with the rulings of the Speaker, but I have not seen any evidence of partisanship on behalf of the Speaker. If every time we did not like a judgement, we changed the Speaker, we would see chaos in our institution.

Members opposite have praised the Speaker many times on his fairness and judgement in the legislature. And the government side, although not always agreeing with the Speaker's ruling, have never questioned his integrity, fairness, and independence. I feel that the Speaker has done an admirable job as the chairperson of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures. Many progressive rule changes were brought about by the first report.

One change that I feel very positive about is the greater role created for private members. The principles of democracy, the legislature, and the role of the Speaker, must be protected from political gamesmanship. The people of this province are not questioning the ethics of the Speaker, but may very well be questioning the ethics of an opposition which do not just want to oppose, but to obstruct; do not just want a chance to debate, but to have the right of a veto — which would in fact halt the process of the legislature. As a government member, I have seen no cause to doubt the Speaker's competence, his fairness, integrity, and independence. I'm opposed to the motion and I encourage all members to vote against this motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Boyd:** — I do not enter into this discussion light-heartedly. The motion that is before the House has been discussed in great deal before it was placed on the order paper, and I will not take a great deal of time for discussing my reasons for supporting this motion.

The Speaker of this Assembly has not been able to separate his partisanship when overseeing this Assembly. I believe, in the recent series of events, the Speaker sided with the government in an unprecedented fashion. As a new member to this legislature, I was under the impression that the Speaker would always be non-partisan. I do not believe today, though, that the Speaker has conducted the affairs of this House in an independent fashion.

The NDP government has, as a result of the Speaker's actions, now been given the go-ahead, been given the go-ahead to crush the rights of over 50,000 farm families in this province.

My colleagues and I recognize the job of the Speaker is not an easy one. However, we also realize that it is impossible for this Assembly to successfully work together if all members do not have a belief that the Speaker's rulings will be fair. A Speaker is a servant of this Assembly not the master of this Assembly, and I am afraid that the decisions made by the Speaker in Saskatchewan have blatantly crossed that barrier.

The Speaker has forced through rules . . . changes in the Rules Committee, an unprecedented act. The Speaker forced a vote on an adjournment motion, another unprecedented act. The Speaker forced a vote on the rule change motion, again another unprecedented act. Decisions such as imposing closure after four days of debate and arriving at a rushed Rules and Procedures Committee meeting with a prepared statement of outcome in his folder — that cannot be seen as fair.

It is because of these kind of actions that I no longer believe this Speaker has the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan in mind. The Speaker has clearly shown to everyone that he agrees with the NDP government's attempts to protect the Minister of Agriculture who after breaking the GRIP contracts of farm families is now trying to cover their tracks.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about bell-ringing. This is not

about bell-ringing. I'll say that again. This is about the problem associated with the GRIP contracts that the government now finds themselves in that predicament. They are going to strip the rights of every farm family in this province in less than two more weeks. In two weeks or less the government will put forward a motion that will deem that the farmers received notice of changes in their GRIP contract when indeed every farmer, every member of this Assembly, every member of the public of Saskatchewan, knows indeed that they did not receive any notice of any kind.

Mr. Speaker, that is indeed what is happening today in this province. And I would argue that the Speaker of this Assembly has helped them arrive at that goal. The Speaker has clearly shown that what he believes the Minister of Agriculture has done is correct, when indeed this matter is still before the courts, and the evidence now is being presented shortly by the government, will tamper with that evidence and indeed crush the rights of those people that are involved in the court case.

And I'm afraid it is impossible for the Speaker of this Assembly to regain the trust and confidence that he has lost. I realize, just as the government . . . or pardon me, just as the Speaker has rallied around the government, I realize now that the government members will rally around the Speaker. It is now incumbent that the Speaker searches his own conscience to decide if he should resign.

Therefore I must stand in support of this motion and ask the member for Saskatoon Nutana to do what I consider the only honourable course of action left to you, sir, is to step down from the Chair of the Speaker of this legislature.

(2045)

**Mr. Pringle:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise with a significant degree of sadness this evening on this particular motion. This motion in my view is extremely vindictive. It's extremely cynical. And I'm very disappointed that some of the new members who have been here a total of maybe 40-50 days are buying into this kind of nonsense in the face of evidence to the contrary in terms of your role.

It was my hope, Mr. Speaker, coming in here this evening that the House Leader of the opposition would have the decency to reconsider and to withdraw the motion. And I'm disappointed that he hasn't.

Mr. Speaker, the theme through the opposition speeches tonight, the theme has been a theme of intimidation, a theme of false accusations towards the Chair and towards yourself personally. A theme of it's my way or no way. That's how they function.

And, Mr. Speaker, the opposition is not interested in debate. They walked out. They adjourned the House during question period. Well that to me does not sound like they're interested in debate. And I hope that people watching tonight will be clearly aware that they're the ones that walked out during question period. They weren't interested in debate.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the former premier and the Leader of the Opposition, went on at some length about his concern about retroactive legislation. Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand here — and I want new members to listen to this — I have in my hand here some 70 Bills that were retroactively legislated in the last term of that government. Some 70 — 7-0 — 70 Bills, 70 pieces of legislation, 10 of them in 1991 alone, Mr. Speaker. So talk about retroactivity — well, Mr. Speaker, that is the height of cynicism. And it's totally inappropriate.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the former premier, now the Leader of the Opposition, talked about broken contracts. Well, Mr. Speaker, he should talk to the 400 dental nurses who he pulled into a gymnasium when he told them that their job was abolished. Talk to them about broken contracts.

He should talk to the municipal governments about the way he dealt with the ward system, the way he opposed the ward system changes on another level of government. He should talk to them about broken contracts.

Mr. Speaker, what this motion is all about, it has nothing to do with anything but the defeat of the Tories in October, 1991. That's what this motion is all about.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Pringle:** — Mr. Speaker, the opposition reached a new low tonight, a new low for them, when they're addressing you, sir, and questioning the way in which you are using your personal staff in the Speaker's office. Mr. Speaker, that from a new member from Souris-Cannington, from my home area which I'm very embarrassed about, that from a new member who is well aware by now, surely, because the general public is well aware, that the Liquor Board had about 10 or 15 employees who were paid for by your government and they had no job descriptions in the Liquor Board.

And there were some 50 people in ministerial offices being charged to the public purse. And he's got the nerve to talk about someone else's office, particularly as he's attacking a member of the Assembly. And I think that's a very sad day. And I hope that the new member thinks about what he said.

Mr. Speaker, I personally cannot believe what I've been hearing tonight. I did not want to participate in this debate, but I just feel that it's important to come to the defence of the Speaker's Chair and to the preservation of this institution. And therefore I decided to make a few comments.

Mr. Speaker, before my time, I think it was in 1987, the government of the day, the opposition now, but many the same team is there, they attacked the Legislative Law Clerk, an Assembly member here, a member of this Assembly, a servant of this Assembly. Attacked the Legislative Law Clerk.

And the premier, who is Leader of the Opposition, is part of that. I was here, Mr. Speaker, when the former government attacked another servant of this legislature, their vicious attack on the Provincial Auditor.

And I would say, Mr. Speaker, that attacks on the servants of this Assembly — yourself in this case and your Chair — devalues all MLAs in this House. It devalues the opposition, it devalues the government, it devalues all of us.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that we as members have a responsibility to protect the servants of this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, I would say though, even in the face of those attacks, and the record of those attacks by the former government — the current opposition — that our parliamentary system will still survive. It has stood the test of time, Mr. Speaker, in moments like these. It has done this before and it'll do it again.

As much as I profoundly disagree with this motion, in our system of parliamentary democracy, they can make this kind of a motion. And we can debate it, and life will go on and the institution will survive.

Having recently been to the United Kingdom, Mr. Speaker, on behalf, I would say of the Assembly — it had all-party support — I was fortunate enough to attend a conference on parliamentary democracy. During that conference, Mr. Speaker, there were members of the Commonwealth from across the world. I gained an appreciation for the strength of our parliamentary institution and, Mr. Speaker, there are many nations — in fact most nations — that are not as fortunate as we are.

Even with the imperfections of parliamentary democracy, and there are many, the alternatives, Mr. Speaker, are not very great. Reforms are required and a number of important changes have already been made. A number of important rule changes have already been made with all-party agreement.

Mr. Speaker, we all agree that additional reforms are necessary. The public is telling us that they want additional reforms. But, Mr. Speaker, motions like this that are based on vindictiveness and cynicism are not constructive — I would even say almost hatred, Mr. Speaker — they're not constructive to the process of positive legislative reform. And this motion is not conducive to effective functioning of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Now the strength of our parliamentary system, Mr. Speaker, as you know, is the ability to adapt over time. And in various environments, there are now some 50 Commonwealth countries — another 6 or 7 countries are wanting to develop a system like ours — they want to get into the parliamentary association, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr. Speaker. But in our system there's got to be the will to make it work by governments, by oppositions, by all parties.

Our system will not survive . . . it will survive but it will have set-backs with these kind of motions, Mr. Speaker, particularly where servants of the Assembly are attacked. Mr. Speaker, our system has provided for political continuity and for stability. The system that we're operating in, Mr. Speaker, in the Isle of Man has survived for over a thousand years. Mr. Speaker, we only realize this, and the value of our system, when we see fragile

political coalitions all over the world that are falling apart.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, and as most people I would say know, that during the 1980s, during the 1980s — in North America certainly, in Saskatchewan, in Canada, in the United States, in the United Kingdom — those were the years, that was the decade when the public lost faith in their democratic institutions and, quite frankly, in we as politicians.

And one must ask the question, Mr. Speaker, and I think many people are asking the question, why did this happen in a decade under Tory reigns? Why is it during the 1980s that the public has lost confidence in their elected officials and their parliamentary institutions? I think, Mr. Speaker, the new member from Souris-Cannington may want to think about that. Why in the 1980s has the erosion of public confidence occurred?

Mr. Speaker, many people believe that this loss of public confidence is because of the vindictive and the cynical actions like this motion. The current opposition, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest, does not know their role as opposition members. They do not know that an important responsibility comes with the role of the official opposition.

In government, they never believed in good government; they never believed in accountability; they never believed in openness or responsibility, Mr. Speaker — and the evidence is overwhelming. The information . . . This is well documented that this government never believed in good government, Mr. Speaker.

The Provincial Auditor well documented that in his special report — his mid-term report that he felt the need to release to the public, Mr. Speaker, saying that the former government, the now opposition members in the front bench, broke their own laws by not sharing information with him that he had a right to see.

Mr. Speaker, the auditor also said that he could only account . . . he could only see 50 per cent of the expenditures of the Government of Saskatchewan during their tenure, Mr. Speaker. He said ministers were not co-operating. They were not calling the Public Accounts Committee, Mr. Speaker. This is the opposition now, and I want the new members to be aware of this, that set up a secret police, secret security, the Property Management Corporation, and another confidential department that nobody knew about, that was giving out money. The public didn't even have a way of it — Saskatchewan Diversification.

The people concerned about democracy tonight are the people who took this province beyond five years before they called the election, had the election; had four vacant seats that had been vacant for up to 22 months. They say they care about democracy and protecting the integrity of this institution, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the first piece of legislation that many new members had to deal with in this House after the 1986 election was a Bill where that government before, now the opposition leader, brought in a Bill giving sweeping powers — Bill 5, sweeping powers — to his cabinet,

where he was able to reorganize departments, set up agencies without even coming into here. They tried everything they could do to bypass this legislature, Mr. Speaker.

So that's the hypocrisy of what we're hearing tonight, Mr. Speaker. The public is not going to be fooled by the pretending concern about democracy now and their focus on the Chair, Mr. Speaker, and you.

Mr. Speaker, the current opposition did everything possible to discredit the role and institution of government and to bypass this Assembly. That was their record in government. Plus, Mr. Speaker, another test of the strength of the parliamentary system is that they were wiped out almost in the last election. That is the safety valve, Mr. Speaker, of a parliamentary system. There were messages for the Liberals in 1971, there were messages for the New Democrats in 1982, and there was a strong message for the Tories in October 1991. My point here, Mr. Speaker, is that democratic institution, this Assembly, will outlast and transcend the longevity of any political party.

Mr. Speaker, as a new member in 1988, it was a great honour for me to be here. Now the residents of Saskatoon Eastview that I had the privilege to represent went 10 months without a representative, which then was the record in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker, by an opposition that now says they're concerned about democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I came in as a new member, had the privilege, even though I was shaking at the knees, to speak the second day after I was elected. I had a lot of respect, Mr. Speaker, and I still do for the Chair then and for the Chair now and you in the Chair. I had a lot of respect for the history and the great political members that have served here from all political parties. Mr. Speaker, I honour the role of the Chair and the role of the Speaker as a symbol of integrity and respect and fairness.

For me, Mr. Speaker, it is still a privilege to be able to speak on behalf of my constituents and to be recognized by you, sir, in the Chair. When Mr. Arnold Tusa was elected Speaker, we in the opposition at the time supported and applauded his election. Even though it was at the 11th hour in the mandate of the government, we applauded that.

(2100)

Mr. Speaker, we had worked with him . . . I had worked with him on the democratic reform paper. We felt, as members of the opposition, free to go to him at any time. He was interested in us as members, like you, Mr. Speaker. He was just and fair and he tried his best in very trying, difficult circumstances. Mr. Speaker, like you, Mr. Tusa took the Speaker's job seriously, he was dedicated, and he worked very hard.

Like you, Mr. Speaker, and I think like most members here, we considered Mr. Tusa a friend; we consider you a friend. And I'm proud to say that I keep in touch with Mr. Tusa. I personally have found him and yourself very approachable. I felt that I could talk to him in confidence and I feel I can talk to you in confidence.

Mr. Tusa did an excellent job under trying circumstances. Mr. Speaker, it's my personal view that the previous government, the now members of the opposition, put a lot of pressure on him. That was very evident from my seat, Mr. Speaker. The former government's tactics, like now, are tactics of a school-yard bully. That is well documented, Mr. Speaker. They beat up on anyone who disagrees. It could be the Legislative Law Clerk, the Provincial Auditor, or the Speaker, the Ombudsman, small NGOs (non-governmental organizations). Anybody who disagrees with them, they beat up on them. Civil servants, they've beaten up on civil servants, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they beat up on anyone who disagrees.

Now the member from Rosthern, Arm River, Wilkie; they're part of this past, Mr. Speaker, the member from Estevan. And it continues today, until today.

Mr. Speaker, there are many examples — just touching on the previous Speaker — there are many examples where we in opposition did not agree with Mr. Tusa. One doesn't always agree with the referee. But, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that he was doing the job to the best of his ability in difficult times, and we never doubted his motivation, Mr. Speaker. We supported him, we elected him, we were all interested in his position succeeding, because the integrity of the Chair, Mr. Speaker, is of the utmost importance in this Assembly. It was when we were in opposition. It is now that that party is in opposition, Mr. Speaker. In opposition we have a responsibility to protect the Chair. Mr. Speaker, we have the obligation to respect the Chair no matter where we sit in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, our job in fact is to enhance and to elevate the integrity of all servants of the Assembly. And I'm very sad that when the Provincial Auditor was attacked, the then premier allowed that to occur. And I'm very sad that the now Leader of the Opposition is agreeing to or possibly even orchestrating this attack on you and the Chair, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is exactly why — to enhance the independence of the Assembly and the watch-dog agency of the Assembly — is exactly why, Mr. Speaker, we want to have an all-party committee that the watch-dog agencies like the Ombudsman, the Human Rights Commission and so on, is accountable to.

Mr. Speaker, I can say to you that while we disagreed on many occasions with Mr. Tusa, it never once crossed our mind, we never once had a discussion in our caucus about showing our non-confidence in him through this kind of a motion. Mr. Speaker, this motion, especially in the face of the difficult circumstances of the past months, demonstrates the opposition's continued attack and vengeance on the institution of parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Speaker, your record is one that you can be proud of. I think, Mr. Speaker, there is no question in the media editorials, whether it's print, radio, or TV, that you've got the unanimous praise for your performance in your Chair. Mr. Speaker, the public is solidly behind you, and, Mr. Speaker, public opinion recognizes the vital role that

you're playing in restoring decorum, dignity, and confidence to this Chamber. The public recognizes your record of impartiality and fairness.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question, as you see tonight the Liberal leader is supporting your chairmanship. Mr. Speaker, you have sat down the Premier, you've sat down the Leader of the Opposition, you've sat down the Liberal leader. You've done that by demonstrating your independence in the Chair. You've appropriately reprimanded all sides when necessary.

I think that we on this side of the House recognize that you're in a lonely, difficult position that takes a lot of courage. Mr. Speaker, you have shown that courage, and, Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear that we on this side of the House believe that you have done just an excellent job, and we will not be supporting this motion which is based on vengeance for the defeat of the government in 1991 and has very little to do with the performance of you in the Chair, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with regret that I enter the debate this evening, and in fact the comments just made by the member from Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain bode a fair bit of discussion and debate in this Assembly this evening. But I will not get into the total involvement of debating the comments that have been made regarding the member.

The debate that is taking place this evening, Mr. Speaker, centres around an issue. And if we take a look back to 1989 and a number of the comments regarding the Speaker of the day in 1989, the Speaker of 1989 did not unilaterally call the House back to order but allowed the process to work, allowed the Government House Leader and the Opposition House Leader to sit down and work out a negotiated settlement under the rules and under the guidelines of the Assembly of the day.

We're also aware, Mr. Speaker, that at that time as well the House was asked to call for the Rules Committee. It was asked to sit down and try and come up with some changes to the Rules Committee, part of those changes being to address the bell-ringing question.

And at that time the Rules Committee was allowed the same . . . the process was allowed to operate. A motion was brought before the Assembly by the Assembly, by the then Speaker, and at that time, as we all remember, there were 28 days of debate centred around that bell-ringing motion. At the end of the day the agreement of the House, again by consensus, was to allow that process to go back to the Rules Committee.

I believe it's unfortunate that we are in this debate today and that we stand in this Assembly . . . must take a stand to voice our concern. And I would suggest it's unfortunate that the Speaker's Chair is probably even tied up with committee, as especially chairman of the Rules Committee, as I believe that the fact that the Speaker being involved as the chairman of the Rules Committee — not just today but in preceding days and preceding legislatures — opens itself up for pressure from all sides

and in particular from government to use their heavy hand to force a decision.

No doubt the debate that has consummated in this Assembly over the past six weeks, six to eight weeks, was a debate that really hit at the emotions of people, not only in this Assembly but across the province — a debate that affects people right across the province; affects their rights, privileges, the rights that the constitution of this country gives to people in this country.

It gives them the right to challenge governments in court and, as was indicated yesterday in question period, when the Premier of this province attempted to bring the land bank legislation into this Assembly as an argument against retroactive legislation, or the process that the government of the day are now taking regarding the GRIP program, in going back to the land bank legislation, we must remind the people of the province of Saskatchewan that the land bank legislation didn't take away land from people, and even if people felt challenged people were given, through the legislation, the ability to go to the courts without any legislation that would hinder that ability.

And therefore it's very difficult to stand in my place today and condone the process that has taken place. It's difficult for me to stand here because I believed when we elected the Speaker for this Assembly, and the process that we decided, the process of change that took place last fall in the first election of a member from the floor to the Chair, that it was the proper process, proper procedure, and that the member elected to the Chair would indeed be duly holding his position very highly and exercising a very non-partisan role in this Assembly.

The fact that the Speaker did make a move and did call the House back in, I believe around the middle of June, was a decision that Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition didn't appreciate and didn't agree with, but we accepted it because we also realized that bell-ringing was a process that the public certainly were asking for decisions to be made on. Now we didn't agree with the fact that the Speaker would unilaterally call the House back in, but we believed that when the Speaker asked the House to come, and the Speaker asked the House leaders and asked for the process to work, we had faith in the process. However, Mr. Speaker, we must stand here opposed to the way the process actually did work and did operate.

For the process did not operate under the rules of this Assembly. What we saw was a government using its committee, a committee where it had the majority, to force or to push or to pressure its way into the committee so that when the committee brought its report to this Assembly there wasn't unanimity amongst the committee members.

However, the Assembly was asked to vote on the recommendations of the committee that the bells be limited. And we will not argue the fact that bells should not be limited, but we must strenuously stand up for the process and suggest that opposition members — be they Liberal, be they Conservative, be they NDP, whenever from now on in — will continue to ask for and must have a form, not only of debate in this Assembly, but a form by



which they can ask the government to hold a piece of legislation so that they can have the proper time needed to talk to the public and debate with the public.

We do not argue the 30 minute bell-ringing. We stand here today in support of the limited bell-ringing. But we cannot stand here and support the fact that the opposition is limited to a 30-minute debate. And the arguments that the member from Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain brought forward just do not coincide with the arguments brought forward in 1989.

The support of the Speaker in 1989, Mr. Speaker, the Speaker of that day did not unilaterally rule and unilaterally give his support and stand to the position of the Rules Committee and support the government in their wishes and demands. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated I did not and do not intend to stand here all evening to debate this motion. But I must indicate that it is with regret that I must support my colleague in the motion that he has brought forward.

(2115)

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to rise today to enter the debate and want to talk a little bit about some of the history of the Rules Committee. And I want to lay that out before this Assembly here today. I must say that I believe that the House Leader has very precisely laid out the reasons why I believe that we need to deal with this matter and we need to deal with it today.

In the discussion on the Rules Committee — I was pleased to serve on that committee, I was asked to be the vice-chairman of that committee — and during the discussion that took place at that time to deal with the process on those rules, it was continually brought to our attention by the chairman and by members of the committee that consensus would be a part of the delivery of an opportunity to change the rules in this Assembly. And during that period of time there was strong debate on issues. There were points of view that were made, but consensus consistently made the day. And, Mr. Speaker, compromise made the day.

And what I see here today and what I have seen in the past three or four weeks have totally riddled the opportunity to have consensus and compromise operate in this Legislative Assembly in the rules and the process of this Assembly. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a very, very serious concern to me because I believe that there was an opportunity in this Assembly to do it right for democracy. I honestly believe that. There was a willingness on the part of this opposition to participate in reform. There was a willingness to participate in decision making that would enhance the opportunity of this Legislative Assembly. But I think it's been seriously curtailed by involvement of the Chair in various areas in the process that has followed the decision to accept the rules as they were outlined.

And, Mr. Speaker, this opposition gave you high marks for the decision that you made to suspend the GRIP Bill. We did it over and over again. The media did also. And we do that today. However, the principle of the suspension was the principle that needed to be dealt with in a consistent way all through the process. Because that is precisely the

reason why this Assembly and members of the opposition said no to the proposal of an introduction of a Bill that would retroactively change history. And we said no because in my mind it is an illegal act by this Legislative Assembly.

And that, Mr. Speaker, we applauded you when you said, suspend the Bill. And the principle of suspension was the principle that we asked when we dealt with the Rules Committee discussion on this side of the House. We dealt with precisely that observation.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we made an amendment to the motion that would have allowed us to go back and provide a time line and a decision-making process whereby we would have established the credibility of this Legislative Assembly, the Rules Committee, and established a precedent for this Assembly and the Speaker of this Assembly to have confidence in the process of this Assembly. But what happened?

Mr. Speaker, and members of this Assembly, I want to point out . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. I ask the member not to interrupt. Let the member have his say. I'll recognize you when you want to get up.

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Speaker, the process in this Assembly was there to allow the opportunity for suspension. It was dealt with in a way that would've allowed the Rules Committee to deal with it. And the member from Moosomin outlined very clearly that in 1989 it was the decision of the Speaker not to become involved. In 1989 it was the decision of the government not to involve the Speaker. It was a decision of this Assembly, and at the process of time, that the people who were responsible for making this House work were held accountable to make the process work. And those were the leaders of the government, the House Leader and the House Leader of the opposition.

And, Mr. Speaker, that was the way it worked. And what happened was, as was outlined by the member from Moosomin, the point was that the Rules Committee had the reference by this Assembly to establish that it should be taken to the Rules Committee. That was why when we went to the Rules Committee it was on the table there for us to discuss.

And that is history that is established as a precedent in this Assembly. And, Mr. Speaker, your suspension assisted that democratic process in doing that. However, the day that you decided to deal with that in the way that you did said to this opposition, and I believe to the people of Saskatchewan, that you were in error.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why we in this side of the House believe that it is fundamental to the continuation of this Assembly that freedom of speech and the involvement of dealing with issues that are controversial, that should be debated, that should be argued with adamancy as crucial as and hard hitting as you possibly can get it, should be done in this Assembly on this basis that we're discussing this issue here tonight.

However, to the members of the government and the executive branch of this government, as I said in the discussion on transferring this back to the Rules Committee, you are in error. Members of this Assembly who are not in executive branch are in error by allowing this Assembly and the leader, so-called, the member from P.A. Carlton, who made the motion in the Rules Committee, is in error. Because it is his responsibility as it is mine to hold executive branch of this government responsible for their actions.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is where we are at. And, Mr. Speaker, as difficult as this is for me to say this, I do not have the confidence in your partiality, in your focus in dealing with this Assembly. In Beauchesne's it says this:

The chief characteristics attached to the office of Speaker in the House of Commons are (two things) authority and impartiality.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have recognized the authority. We have recognized that in our conduct in this House, I believe.

We have had Bills in this Assembly that we strongly disagreed with, in the last session and in this session, but did we curtail the discussion by bell-ringing? Other than one that was going to illegally take and place a Bill before this Assembly that would void 50,000 contracts. We said on our part that we could not deal with that very lightly. We said, there is a place for this hard-hitting kind of action, and we placed it right there, Mr. Speaker.

We have just as much disagreement with the energy Bill, we have just as much disagreement with the environment Bill that are coming forward, but have we said that we would not debate and tell you what we think about it? We have had just as much difficulty with the E&H (education and health) tax Bill that you have presented to this House, and we have put the Minister of Finance through a lot of questions in Committee of the Whole because we don't believe in the things he's proposing to do. And that, Mr. Speaker, is our right as an opposition.

But when it comes to our role in dealing with the fundamental belief that we do something illegal in this Assembly in changing the laws retroactively to deem something to have happened that didn't, then, Mr. Speaker, we draw the line in the sand. We say that is as far as we as the opposition, representing those contract-holders who have told us over and over again, to consistently resist the government in its deliberate attempt to stop those contracts, to rewrite them . . . And, Mr. Speaker, that is what this opposition decided to do, understanding the rules right from the beginning that that's what they were. And in the middle of the ball game, the umpire gets involved.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've been a sportsman all my life, participated a lot, and I've seen bias in calls and I've kept my mouth shut. I've never been kicked out of a game. I've never been kicked out of a ball game, a hockey game, and I've played a lot of them. And, Mr. Speaker, the reason is because I listen to the authority that was there, and that was the referee, and I had to play under those rules.

But there comes a time, Mr. Speaker, and this is more than a ball game, this is democracy. This is the fundamental belief in the freedom of individuals to express through their elected representatives the voice that they have, to have themselves heard and to be represented here in the kind of way that we are doing here today. And I saw that, Mr. Speaker, curtailed. And I'm sad about it. I'm very disappointed.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of sadness that I support the member from Rosthern today. And I say again as Beauchesne's has said:

The chief characteristics attached to the office of Speaker in the House of Commons are authority and impartiality.

And I don't believe the impartiality was there because you placed yourself at risk when you decided that you were going to place yourself behind the government to dictate the politics of an issue. And I don't believe that you were fair in doing that.

It goes on to say that:

Confidence in the impartiality of the Speaker is an indispensable condition of the successful working of procedure . . .

And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that also. And I believe that the impartiality was set at risk in this Assembly. And therefore, I will be supporting the motion by the member from Rosthern because I fundamentally believe that to be accurate. And I fundamentally believe that I'm representing my constituents and the people who called me on the issue that generated this concern.

And I am certain, Mr. Speaker, that we will see more of this. And it bothers me a lot when I see the kinds of things that are being done by this administration. The resistance that we need to place in the way so we can say to them, look it, there are better ways to do it, are things that we should consider, are seriously curtailed by your decision to do this.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am supporting the member from Rosthern's motion.

The division bells rang from 9:28 p.m. until 9:32 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

#### Yeas — 9

Devine	Britton
Neudorf	Toth
Swenson	Goohsen
Boyd	D'Autremont
Martens	

#### Nays — 34

Romanow	Lyons
Van Mulligen	Pringle
Thompson	Lautermilch
Tchorzewski	Calvert
Lingenfelter	Murray

Shillington	Draper
Koskie	Whitmore
Anguish	Roy
Goulet	Cline
Kowalsky	McPherson
Carson	Harper
Penner	Keeping
Cunningham	Kluz
Upshall	Carlson
Bradley	Renaud
Koenker	Langford
Lorje	Haverstock

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, by leave, we would move to government business.

Leave granted.

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### Consolidated Fund Expenditure Rural Development Vote 43

#### Item 1 (continued)

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'm glad to see that you have your folks with you all ready to go on the questions for tonight. As I indicated in the previous attempt to go through these questions, I will now ask you if you will deliver the answers to the questions that we asked at that time. I have some of them but I don't have all of them. If they are available or if you have made them available I would like to know where are they?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, we have the information that was asked for on the staffing. The question that they raised concerning one Mr. Brian Oster who had a lease, I can inform the members opposite that Mr. Oster surrendered his lease on May 27 of 1992 and he is given an annual permit for 1992 and some of his . . . he was paid out for leases as is . . . for improvements on the lease as per standard policy of the department.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Mr. Minister, how much was he paid out and when was the payment made?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, I don't believe, without checking with the Department of Justice, that we can release information on individual accounts to the public on numbers that were paid, at this time.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Mr. Minister, with all due respect, I don't believe that your answer is correct. I would give you one more chance to answer that question because I believe that it is within your power to release that figure.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, we will check with the Department of Justice to see if this is indeed not a violation of the individual's rights. And if it is not, and indeed is available to the public, we will certainly release it to you.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Mr. Minister, I think this looks more like a cover-up than anything else I've seen so far. You have an NDP candidate in the election whom everybody in our constituency was wondering where his pay-off would be for sacrificing his own principles that people thought that he had, to run with a party that most folks believed that he didn't belong with to start with. And everyone believed that there would be a pay-off.

I suggest to you that you are covering up a pay-off. This is taxpayers' money and the public demands to know where this money was paid and when it was paid and why it was paid. And I demand of you that you tell the people of this province how much money you paid your candidate so that he could move to Medicine Hat to live because he couldn't stand to live under this regime.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, section 39 of the Act spells out what improvements and how they will be valued and how they will be paid out. And that was what we . . .

**The Chair:** — Order, order, order. Order, order. If it's the wish of the members to continue in committee then the members will observe order. Order, order. Order, order. The Minister of Rural Development. Order.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, as I said, section 39 of the Act spells out specifically what improvements and how they are to be valued and how they are to be paid out. This was totally in this case complied with. All we did was complied with the Act and paid out according to the formulas therein.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — I have no doubt that you would follow the rules in the Act, Mr. Minister, in order to cover your backsides. The point is, who did the assessment?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, the department staff do the evaluation according to . . . from a manual that sets out how it is to be done.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Would you name the individuals involved.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — The lands manager in that area is Greg Haase. And we assume that it was done under his supervision or by himself.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Is that individual an employee of your department?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Yes, Mr. Chairman, that certainly is what I said the first time. That the employee . . . the staff of the department that do the land evaluations and improvement evaluations as we do on all . . . When all leases are turned over we do the valuation of the improvements, and they're paid out, as I said, by the staff according to the manual and according to section 39 of the Act.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Do you not think, Mr. Minister, in a situation where there's a definite conflict of interest that you knew would be raised in this Assembly, had to be raised in this Assembly, that you should have gone to the independent assessment that is available to your

department and is practised in all cases like this?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — I don't know what conflict of interest the particular civil servant would have had in that case, Mr. Chairman.

(2145)

**Mr. Goohsen:** — When you were dealing with the assets to be valued of a person who has just run as a candidate for your party, a partisan political party, when that individual has run for you . . . and I know that this hurts the government members in the back benches and they can't keep quiet to listen to it because now we're washing their dirty linen in public. And this is dirty linen. Believe me, the people of Saskatchewan will know about this dirty linen.

It looks to me like about \$80,000 is the figure that's floating around for a farmhouse out in the country that may be worth money in the city but has absolutely no value whatsoever sitting out west of Golden Prairie some place in the boondocks of Saskatchewan — \$80,000. The only place they could find a candidate was out close to the Alberta border where he could escape back to Medicine Hat to get away from the very administration that he had once tried to join.

In view of that conflict of interest, it would seem to me that you would do an independent appraisal, an independent appraisal of farm buildings in Saskatchewan that nobody else will ever want. Because this government has seen to it that farmers are going to go broke and there will be no demand for farm homes any place in this province. There will be no demand for those buildings. There will be no way that you can recover that money.

I say to you that you will have orchestrated very probably a figure that would be commensurate with homes in a populated area of this province, not out in the areas where nobody would ever buy it again to live in, the likelihood of which is very slim. And I suggest to you that you should have hired an independent appraiser for those buildings.

I suggest to the people of this province that this is the pay-off for that candidate. Everybody in our constituency was wondering where his pay-off would come from. They were expecting him to get a big government appointment, but seeing as how he was leaving the province there was no other better way to pay him off than to give him cash. When all else fails, cash sounds better. That's what one of the guys said over here.

Mr. Minister, in consideration that you not only, through your department, paid this individual \$80,000, as reported through the folks out in the country, and now that you're refusing to give to us the actual amount, in view of the fact that you have done that, you are now saying that you leased this land back to that same individual, are you not? Is that what you've done.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, I'm surprised that the member opposite would refer to his riding as the boondocks. I assure the member that we do not consider Maple Creek to be boondocks and that we . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — We are certain that there are still people who want to live in Maple Creek despite the representation that they have down there, and they will probably be able to sell a house . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — I'm informed by my officials that Mr. Oster hired on his own a private appraiser to appraise it. That appraisal value was higher than what the department appraised it at, so he ended up getting the lower value which was what we appraised it at when the department . . .

As to the leaseback, this land was leased back on an annual permit and will be tendered for rent this fall.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Mr. Minister, could you give us the name of the independent appraiser that Mr. Oster used?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Apex is the name of the company that appraised it for Mr. Oster.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Could you give us the name and the address of the people who actually did the appraising?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — We do not know the . . . Mr. Oster hired the company to do it. We're not aware of which individual did the appraisal. We were given the appraisal which . . . not the . . . It's not our business to know who works and who does appraisals for private corporations.

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Minister, will you provide to this Assembly whether that individual was accredited with the engineers who are required . . . who has his association with the registered appraisers of the province of Saskatchewan? Will you provide the name of the company and the individuals who were involved in that appraisal?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, that is a private company doing private work. The appraisal that was used in the valuation was the appraisal done by our department. The appraisal that was done by the private company was higher than what our value was appraised at.

That was a question that was asked, and I just passed that on for the information of the member who asked it. It certainly is not our intention to demand from private firms the names of their staff who do work for them.

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Minister, it is a requirement under the lands branch regulations that a registered appraiser be used in qualifying the bids that are placed by individuals on their own individual land. And I don't think that you need to pretend that it should be any other way.

And that, Mr. Minister, is why we're asking you to present this individual's name and also where he's registered in, significant in the appraisers' organization so that we know exactly who he is. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, the policy of the department has always been that with the surrendering of lease and valuing of improvements, it is done by the department staff. And that has been the policy and it is done in many, many cases.

**Mr. Martens:** — In addition to that, Mr. Minister, it is the policy of the department to ask for an approved appraiser to deal with the appraisals that are going on. If I had lease land, it would be the responsibility of mine if I did not approve of the price that I was going to use to purchase that land that I would have to have an approved appraiser to verify the value of that land. And that, Mr. Minister, is a fact.

And we want to know whether Apex was just a blip in the system or whether it was a registered appraiser doing the job. Was he a realtor that didn't have an appraisal licence in the province of Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, the rules may well say that to accept the appraisal we need an accredited appraisal. We did not accept the appraisal of the private appraiser. The appraisal that was accepted was the one done by the department, accepted by Mr. Oster, and that's the one by which the value was determined.

**Mr. Martens:** — Yes, Mr. Minister. However, at this point in time when a person who ran for you is asking for money from the Government of Saskatchewan, it is incumbent on you to provide that to us because we feel that perhaps, if it wasn't an approved appraisal that was done by some individual who is a realtor, that does not qualify that individual to have that as the bench-mark so that you can undercut it by that volume of dollars.

And that, Mr. Minister, is what I perceive has happened here. And I would like to know who they were and their registry as an approved appraiser in the province of Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, the policy and the Act states that on purchase of land, an accredited appraiser is needed and we would not accept appraisal of any other than an accredited appraisal. In the case of valuing of improvements, I repeat again, the department policy has been for the department staff to value the improvements and to accept, on occasion, if the lessee is not happy with our valuation, to accept outside valuation from other appraisals and not necessary accredited appraisers.

**Mr. Martens:** — Well, Mr. Minister, I'm not going to buy that because I want to know who the individual was. Was he out of Medicine Hat? Was he out of Calgary? Where was he out . . . Was he a realtor? Was it Apex realty?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — To the best of the recollection of my officials, it was Apex realty that did the appraisal. Again, Mr. Chairman, I point out that the land, the value that Mr. Oster received, was the value that was put on the improvements by the staff of the department in compliance with the Act and in compliance with the manual for valuing those assets.

**Mr. Martens:** — Will the minister provide to this Assembly the details of the appraisal, for us to see it, and provide that evaluation of whether that was a responsible estimate of the value of the goods that you purchased.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Certainly, Mr. Chairman, we can provide the method of calculation that was used and again, as I've said earlier, on consultation with the Department of Justice as to what individual rights are in reference to particular contracts, whether or not we can release these, if there is not a problem with the individuals' rights on releasing information on those contracts, we will also release the final numbers.

**Mr. Martens:** — When was the land sold to the Land Bank Commission that he was resident on?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, we don't have that information but we can certainly get it for the members opposite.

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Minister, will you provide the value of the land, the time it was sold, and from whom it was purchased — whether it was purchased from him as an individual or was it purchased from his family? Who was it purchased from? And we'd also like to have you establish what those assets were sold for, and provide that information to this Assembly as well.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, we can certainly provide that information. I would remind the member opposite we did not sell this land, merely paid out the lessee for improvements that were made to the land.

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Minister, are you . . . how many other places in the province of Saskatchewan are you providing the same benefit in lands branch at this point in time? How many other places have you got in similar circumstances?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, in any case . . . in all cases where leases are surrendered, lessees are paid out for the value of improvements.

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Minister, how many in the province of Saskatchewan in 1992 to this day?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, again we don't have exact numbers. My officials estimate probably in the neighbourhood of 15 or 20 lessees that received value for improvements.

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Minister, I'd like to have you provide a list of all of them to this Assembly for us to consider.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Certainly, Mr. Chairman, we can provide a list.

**Mr. Martens:** — We'd like to have the list with the evaluation and the process that was used in evaluating the value of the assets in the delivery of that also, Mr. Minister.

(2200)

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Certainly we can. We can even provide you a manual that the staff use and you can calculate them yourself.

**Mr. Martens:** — Mr. Minister, in my work with the Department of Rural Development, I happened to write some of that stuff so I know what's in it. Unless you changed it drastically to suit your customer, Mr. Brian Oster who now lives in Medicine Hat and who was a candidate of yours, unless you typically did that for him, I understand what those rules are about.

I want to know all of the details of every single one of those land sales or facility sales that you have made since 1991. And I want to ask you to provide that to us.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, I already said we can give the list of land sales . . .

**The Chair:** — Order. Order. Order.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, we will provide the list that's been asked for.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We will anxiously await the answers to those questions, and the people of Saskatchewan will also anxiously await to find out how much it's worth to run as a candidate defeated in an election when you are with the NDP.

Mr. Minister, last time we were involved in this questioning of your department, I started to ask you some questions that I had jotted down and I think that I may have confused some of the questions a little bit. And in respect for you being able to answer the questions, we would gladly offer to send those questions across to you in written form.

If you prefer, I will read them in. I realize that we had instructions from your side of the House requesting that we put into words all of our questions. If you'd like us to do that, we will do that. The choice is yours and I ask you now which way you'd like to have it. Which way would you be prepared to answer the questions?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, we probably would be less confusing to have them in writing.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — All right. Just for the benefit of the listening public, my colleague has suggested that I really should read them to you and then deliver the written thing so that you will actually have it.

I started my first question by saying we wanted to start with your own staff, Mr. Minister, and we wanted you to give us a list of the persons working for the minister's office, or otherwise who report directly to you, each of their titles, salaries, job description, education and employment history, including their last place of employment. I'd also like to know each, if any, who worked or were paid by any other part of government before being on your payroll. Have any of them been reclassified since joining the government?

(1)(b) Please provide (1) covering all persons terminated

or vacant positions eliminated: (a) a list of all the persons fired, retired, or otherwise terminated in the department since November 1, 1991, including the nature of termination and whether with cause or without cause where applicable; (b) a separate list of positions eliminated including the names of incumbents where applicable.

And (2) for each position in both categories referenced above: (a) the name of the immediate superior; (b) a job description of each position; (c) complete compensation details including salary, expenses, allowances, special payments and so on; (d) the length of time employed, including the date the person first started work for the department; (e) the employment record, including the place of last employment of most recent incumbent; (f) employment qualifications, including education of most recent incumbent; (g) where contracts exist, true copies of those contracts of most recent incumbents; (h) the physical location of a person's place of employment, i.e., where the most recent incumbent actually did their work; (i) if a replacement was hired, the name and same details above requested for the new employee; (j) if the position was eliminated as opposed to some other position, what was the process and the resulting rationale for getting rid of this employee or his position?

k) If the incumbent had been hired since November 1, 1991, the name and the same detail requested above for the immediate preceding incumbent. (1) (c) provide a) a list of all positions created since November 1, 1991; b) a job description of each position created; c) the specific rationale for creating each position; d) the name of the persons filling each position; e) the salary and benefits associated with each position including related costs such as office equipment, furniture, and space costs, and if the employment is by way of contract, a true copy of that contract, the existence of which is required by law.

(1) (d) the results of (1) (a) to (1) (c) should be a complete list of all the persons hired and all persons terminated since November 1, 1991. For clarity ensure that a complete list with full details is provided that is comprehensive in covering all persons hired since November 1, 1991 in any capacity, and all persons terminated since November 1, 1991 for any reason.

(1) (e) where in above questions you refuse to provide employment history, have you asked the affected persons for their consent to provide their employment history to the Assembly, and if not, why not, considering no law forbids the release of such information with the consent of the affected person. If so, confirm that the employee directed that his or her employment history be kept secret.

(1) (f) a list of all reclassifications in the department since November 1, 1991, including the names of the affected employees, the changes in position, the reasons for reclassification, the resultant changes in salary and benefits, the date of the most recent previous reclassification along with the same details for that previous reclassification.

Now that, Mr. Minister, takes me to the end of the questions that I had written up for you last time, but in

perusing it I realized that I had left parts out in the questions. And so now you have the more complete list of the things that I personally would like to know on behalf of my constituents and the people of this province.

If you want to make a comment on that, I'll let you and then I'll proceed with the rest of my questions.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, we, I think, answered some of those questions last night. I think we have some more information here. I think what I would like to do is get that in writing and we will make sure we have a complete answer to all of those questions and get them back to you.

**Mr. Swenson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, in some of your earlier responses to the member from Maple Creek on the questions about Mr. Oster, can you tell the Assembly on what date the funds were dispersed?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, those funds have not yet been dispersed.

**Mr. Swenson:** — So that the settlement that the member from Maple Creek was asking about which you said you would have to check with the Department of Justice, that none of those funds have been dispersed?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — That's correct.

**Mr. Swenson:** — Mr. Minister, I find it a little bit strange that if you have not dispersed any of these funds to the individual yet, they aren't actually in his hands, why you would have problems divulging to the legislature the appraisal value which your department has placed upon it. In other words, that the individual hasn't got the funds of the taxpayer yet. Your department has made an evaluation. He doesn't have the money. Why would you not want to divulge that information to the Assembly?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, it's not that I don't want to divulge the information to the Assembly, and as I've said, if I find . . . On consulting with the Department of Justice, if I find that it's not violating an individual's rights to release the terms of a contract with us, or potential, we will certainly release those.

**Mr. Swenson:** — All right, Mr. Minister, we'll give you the benefit of the doubt and allow you to consult with the Department of Justice.

I have another couple of questions I want to ask you. You placed the lease-to-own program on hold this spring. Can you tell the Assembly how many contract-holders were involved in the lease-to-own program?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, we do not have with us the number of farmers who bought land. It's about 190,000 acres that was sold under the rent-to-own program.

**Mr. Swenson:** — So, Mr. Minister, we're given to understand that all contracts that were entered into under the lease-to-own program, whether it was people that simply had their application in or those that had already been processed, that anyone who was in that program has

been put on hold? Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, I think I explained this last night. Anybody who had an appraisal completed and paid for, the sale was continued and finished. No other sales were proceeded with.

**Mr. Swenson:** — Mr. Minister, I'm sorry that I missed that discussion last night, but I have a number of constituents that were involved with the lease-to-own program. And given the state of the agricultural economy, it looked like a reasonable way for them to acquire, in some cases, Crown land that had been in the family through leases for generations and that they had planned on maintaining their farming operation with this particular mechanism that was available to them.

I wonder if you would mind, for my satisfaction, to sort of put the reasons forward again of why this particular program was put on hold this spring.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, we are in the process of reviewing all of our land sales programs and our rental programs, our land use programs, and that is the reason this particular program was put on hold.

**Mr. Swenson:** — So what you're saying is that those people that had started the process, had appraisals done, were looking forward to participating in this program, that you have no philosophical problem with it, that you simply are doing a review and that review will be done by when?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — That review should be completed some time this fall.

**Mr. Swenson:** — Well I think it's pretty important, Mr. Minister, that as these people start planning their lives again, that you're prepared to be fairly definitive with them. Will it be September 15? Will it be October 15? What is the expectation? One does not line up financing, one does not decide how many heifers you're going to carry over, what your breeding program will be, you know, just at the spur of a moment. People have to plan their lives.

(2215)

The same arguments have been made with the problems with the GRIP contract. You're expecting people to redefine their farming careers around bureaucratic decisions of your department. And I think it's incumbent upon you to tell this Assembly that this process is going to proceed at some given point.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, I would like to point out to the member opposite that the rent-to-own program was for people to purchase land that they were currently leasing from the department. It's not as if they were adding or changing their farming operation. It's simply a purchasing of lease land that they now continue to lease.

We do plan to do considerable consultation on our land policy, and for that reason I think, given the harvest season and the summer season, that before we do our

consultation and have a final policy review done, it will probably be closer to November, December than it would be to September.

**Mr. Swenson:** — Mr. Minister, what was the . . . Of the contracts that your department had the ability to review, what would be the average size of the lease-to-own program? What would be the median average that farmers and ranchers in this province were looking at on the lease-to-own program?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — I think the average would be somewhere in the average of two or three quarter sections.

**Mr. Swenson:** — So we're not talking about very large parcels of land in most instances. We're talking about very small . . . and I would suggest to you the ability to pay is a prime factor in people deciding on what they're going to do. And I think, Mr. Minister, the statement that they're already leasing this land isn't good enough. People are lining up financing to purchase this land. They're purchasing through a lease to own, but they're trying to ensure that their future won't be impinged, I would suggest to you, by some future government decision in the leasing area perhaps.

And I think in your consultation that you make sure that you talk to all of the groups that are relevant in this area, unlike what we've seen in some of your other forays in the agricultural area. And that you be prepared to report to this legislature about those consultations, who you've talked to, and be able to document it well and bring it back to the floor of this Chamber, unlike some of the other consultations that supposedly have gone on in this House by your department and others, and there's never any verification. And I would expect and will serve notice to you, on this particular issue, that you and your department be prepared to give us that documentation of who you were talking to.

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, I think the members opposite have been in the Assembly too long and are used to *Hansard*. When we have meetings, we don't normally record minute details and minutes of consultations with groups in town halls and elsewhere.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, in the budget you used the figure, I believe, of 7.4 per cent reduction in average municipal grants for this year. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — That's correct.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — A couple of things that I want to know is, after yesterday's questions we received from you a list that says the rural revenue-sharing grants, Saskatchewan Rural Development, June 1992. Now would this document reflect those figures?

**Hon. Mr. Cunningham:** — Mr. Chairman, those numbers reflect the . . . There are some grants which are not on that sheet, some additional grants.

The numbers there reflect a little of the creative bookkeeping of the previous administration. They reflect

the difference between the numbers that were sent out to the RMs (rural municipality) last year as compared to the numbers that were sent out this year. The 7.4 per cent is the difference between what was spent last year and what will be spent this year.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Mr. Minister, if there's any creative bookkeeping going on in this province today, it's by your government. You're in charge now. You're responsible for what you say and what you do.

You said to the people of this province that you were showing restraint in every way, that you were only going to cut back 7.4 per cent. You went out into the news media and you planted that figure in the minds of everybody — creative or uncreative bookkeeping, that's the figure you used. That's the figure you spread through this province to every municipality.

You told everybody in this province that you were using a rational approach to down-sizing the amount of money that you were going to spend. And the bottom line on this page for the people of this province to know is that you decreased it by 18.3 per cent to municipalities, not 7.4 per cent. And the reality, Mr. Minister, there, is that you deceived the people of this province by telling them 7.4 per cent when in fact it was 18.3 per cent.

You have municipalities in here . . . and at the time I recall reading articles in the media where you made statements that it would average out, that there would be some municipalities that in fact would have increases in their grants instead of decreases, and those increases were going to counterbalance the ones that got big decreases, and that the average would in fact be 7.4 per cent.

And I suggest to you, Mr. Minister, that I can only find one on the first page, one on about the fourth or fifth page . . . How many pages are there? There's two I can find out of 298 municipalities, I think, there are altogether. And I find two municipalities that were increased, two were increased. And there are less than a handful that are under 7.4 per cent. The rest, in excess of 250 if all of the municipalities are on this list — I haven't counted them but I take your word that you gave all of them to me, because that's what I asked for — in way in excess of 250 municipalities have decreases in excess of 7.4 per cent. And in fact your own figure at the bottom of the page says 18.3 per cent. And I'm going to have a mathematician check that, because I seriously doubt that it's even that.

The reality, Mr. Minister, is that if you had been totally out front with the RMs and just come clean with them and told them that you were going to cut their budgets by an average of 18.3 per cent, these are the kind of people, Mr. Minister, out in the country who would have accepted the fact that they have to play a role in paying the bills of the province. They wouldn't have liked it. But they would have accepted it.

But now they have no trust in you. They'll have no faith in you. The next time you come up with a set of figures they're going to say, this guy doesn't know how to run a calculator. When he says 7.4, it really means 18.3.

How do you expect the people of this province to have



any confidence in you or your department from this date forward? All of the municipalities that we talked to told us through the winter, boy we sure got hit. Somebody must have really came out of this thing looking good and got a big increase.

So we checked around the municipality and we couldn't find any. Then we asked the Minister: how do these figures work? We asked him repeatedly in this House. But oh no, he skirted the issue. He wouldn't tell us how the system works. Now he says there are even some grants that haven't been disclosed on these pieces of paper.

Well, Mr. Minister, last time we met in this Assembly and discussed these matters I asked you for a list of all of the grants, every one of them. And if there is something now that you aren't showing us, I give you one more chance to deliver them to us and show us that you can still have some respect out in the country, in the province of Saskatchewan, with the rural people that you are supposed to represent.

And that poses another question, Minister. What is your position in cabinet and how do you view it? Do you view yourself, Mr. Minister, as the champion of rural Saskatchewan and municipalities and crop insurance? Or do you view yourself as a member of a cabinet where you have to do what you're told? Are you their champion or are you the one that's supposed to deliver the goods to the farmers and the ranchers and the municipal people in this province, and stick it down their throat the best way you know how so that they don't see it coming, and pull the wool over their eyes wherever you can? Is that the role you play?

**An Hon. Member:** — Or are you Roy's lap-dog?

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Somebody mentioned the term lap-dog. I don't know if that's quite right or not but it just makes me wonder. In past it has been the experience of rural municipalities to have ministers in charge of their affairs that championed their causes, that would actually put their jobs on the line in cabinet in order to represent the people that were in need of the services of their department, of the very department that you are the head of.

That's what's expected in the province of Saskatchewan especially from people in rural municipal circles. They expect the minister of their affairs to actually champion their causes and to come into this cabinet and sit at those tables in those discussions and argue for the rights and the needs of the people in the country. And you haven't been doing that. You say 7.4 per cent and it turns out to be 18.3 per cent. It is an absolute fact that you do not have confidence from the people in this province any longer. And, Mr. Minister, I suggest to you that you are playing your role wrong. You are to be the champion of the people that you represent through your department. The Minister of Health champions the needs of the people who are sick. The Minister of Rural Development must be the champion of the people in rural municipalities in rural Saskatchewan and the people that need the services of Crop Insurance and all those other departments that fall in your jurisdiction.

It is absolutely a fact, Mr. Minister, that democracy can only work in fairness if the ministers in charge of each department have the confidence of the people that they represent. And you no longer have that confidence.

And I want you to take note from this day forward and correct your ways. Because it's only three years to the next election, and that may not be a long time when you're busy, but it's a long time if you're out in the municipalities watching things go from wreck to ruin and from rock to dust. And it just seems to me that maybe at this point you could turn your direction around and do something that would make you important in the eyes of the people.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Chairman, I move the committee rise and report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

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

The Assembly adjourned at 10:30 p.m.