

EVENING SITTING

The Speaker: -- I want to draw members' attention to a procedural glitch that occurred just before 5 o'clock this evening. Earlier in the debate the member from Morse moved the adjournment of the debate. Later the member from Thunder Creek moved a second motion to adjourn the debate. The second motion was technically out of order because there had been no intervening proceeding recorded in the **Journal** as required by rule 4. While it is too late to correct the error, I am hereby informing members that this is not to be considered a precedent. Order.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS Bill No. 79

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that Bill No. 79 -- An Act to Provide for the Division of Saskatchewan into Constituencies for the Election of Members of the Legislative Assembly and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Swenson be now read a second time.

Ms. Haverstock: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to be rising this evening to talk about The Constituency Boundaries Act. In a province of fewer than a million people where the population is becoming more and more heavily weighted in urban centres, it is the responsibility of our government to ensure that the interests of all people are fairly represented.

Democracy in Saskatchewan is particularly sensitive to this unequal population distribution because it is important to have rural interests fairly represented, but impractical to assume that this can be done without some compensation for smaller population numbers outside of our cities.

And we are faced therefore with three fundamental issues. First, Mr. Speaker, is fairness and equality. Second, integrity of process; and finally, efficiency and cost effect of delivery of services by our government representatives.

Let me begin with the concept of equality, the concept of one person, one vote. Now ideally this concept is the one upon which democracy should be based. The problem that we have in the province of Saskatchewan in trying to draw boundaries is which . . . which have MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) representing the same number of people in each constituency is obviously that rural constituencies are and will remain too huge for an MLA to properly serve.

Furthermore, part of the electoral boundaries issue has to do with elections. And it is virtually impossible for candidates in rural areas to make contact with people over such extreme distances, to make themselves known. What that does of course is to

result in any incumbent MLA having far greater advantage than others would enjoy.

The possibility of combining urban and rural voters in one constituency is something that has indeed been discussed and posed by some. It may in fact have some merit, Mr. Speaker, as long as there is balance between urban and rural voters in a constituency. In fact, perhaps the time has come that we would end up with a fostering of a greater understanding between urban and rural people if indeed they were represented by one member of the Legislative Assembly.

A combined rural-urban seat which encompasses rural residents and the central trading area might encourage much greater knowledge on the issues unique to both sets of voters, thereby forcing people like ourselves, members of the Legislative Assembly, to become more informed, far more sensitive to issues of both urban and rural citizens.

What must not happen as the result of any redrawn boundaries is for rural residents to be left with a feeling that they are now classed as second-class citizens in the province of Saskatchewan because of the economic situation which has caused out-migration from rural areas to this point in time.

The previous government made decisions which often made people in urban centres feel that they were left out. And people actually discussed, members now on the government side, people who are residents of the province of Saskatchewan, that much of that was done for purely political reasons. That practice was considered by some to be grossly unfair by people in urban constituencies.

The electoral map redrawn in 1991 was considered to reflect rural bias. And prior to that, the New Democratic government seemed oblivious to the needs of rural Saskatchewan, and that too was very unhealthy for our provincial perspective. People are very disturbed over any hint of manipulation, and that's really what this discussion is all about. When it comes to boundaries, quite frankly, I believe that people are far more interested in a sense of real fairness than complete equality.

As we all know, fair and equal are not the same thing. It's why we have golf handicaps, it's why we have gate equalization, it's why we have child tax credits and graduated income tax: all things that I'm sure the members opposite, who like to speak out -- as one is speaking, Mr. Speaker -- I'm sure that all of them are quite familiar with the things that we do in order to create fairness.

Similarly, we must take into account that making everything equal under the electoral map may not necessarily produce a better democracy, and may in fact result in under-representation for certain areas of our province.

In speaking as I have to many people throughout

Saskatchewan about political reform -- as the member from Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain has done as well -- and I've had many discussions about changes to the democratic process, the most important message from people is that they are very tired of those on the reins of power manipulating the democratic process. This appears to be at the very root of political cynicism in our province and probably one could claim across the entire country.

I believe that it is acceptable for government to appoint a commission and to charge them with the responsibility of a percentage variation, from constituency to constituency. But that is, Mr. Speaker, where the line should be drawn. I support an objective re-evaluation, a perpetual fine tuning of the electoral boundaries to account for migratory patterns. I do not support having the government, elected members of a particular political party, dictating the types of changes which should be made.

If we are to have an independent commission, then let's have exactly that -- an independent commission. It has been a mere weeks since the government announced that we will have an electoral commission, and that that would be appointed. And since then, we've had the following: the government setting the number of seats -- and, of course, what we've heard in this legislature is the fact that everywhere in Canada this has happened, where governments have dictated in electoral boundary redrawings, that the number of seats would be X.

Well why is it that we should do what has always been done? What we're talking about is true reform. What we're wanting is to get away from the way that things have been, that have resulted in the kind of political manipulation that's resulted in people having the sense of being manipulated and resulting in cynicism. Why wouldn't we do things differently? And why wouldn't we allow an independent commission to be truly independent?

Secondly, what we've had is the member from Moose Jaw saying that there will be definitely two seats in the city of Moose Jaw. We've had an announcement stating that there will be two northern seats and that they will remain. We've had the Minister of Justice assuring us that seats in Prince Albert will not change and that the seat in Lloydminster will remain unchanged as well.

What exactly is the government really afraid of will happen if learned people, learned people, appointed people and people agreed to by all three parties in this Assembly are allowed to make their own decisions? It's not as if this is this massive majority government won't have a vote once the commission is finished its work, Mr. Speaker. They indeed do hold all the power.

As everyone knows, government controls the rules. There isn't a person in Saskatchewan who doesn't know that. They ultimately will be able

to make the decisions, Mr. Speaker. They have a 55-member majority government and they will ultimately be able to make whatever decisions they want come to fruition.

Political reform is not an election gimmick. It is not a buzz word. As someone who is in the Legislative Assembly because I really do want to see positive change, I want to effect change. Political reform is a tool. And it's a mechanism for making our system more responsive to the electorate, for regaining the trust of the people who pay taxes to finance their government and to finance the programs that serve them.

Now I remember raising the issue of fewer MLAs during the televised leaders' debate in the 1991 election. I raised this in the House this past week. Both my opponents in that debate, the hon. member from Estevan and the member from Riversdale, scoffed at the idea of fewer of MLAs, on provincial television. And it's on tape for all to see. In other words, both basically dismissed the idea of a reduction in the size of government and they saw this as unnecessary when it came to the numbers of members of the Legislative Assembly.

The Premier joked that maybe, and I quote him: we should have just one very highly paid MLA and save huge amounts of money. And now, now because the public is demanding, and in fact they expect, a better way of doing things, the government has decided and appears to be wanting to get in step with public opinion.

Ultimately it really doesn't matter to me who brings ideas to fruition or even who takes credit, although I would hope that the Conservatives would not want to argue with printed matter and the video tapes on the issue of who said what first. What matters most is that the Saskatchewan political system begin to be rid of manipulation and that it begin to be rid of inefficiencies caused by people, claimed by some to be selfish in their motives and are deemed politicians with their own interests at heart, where they really want re-election and nothing but re-election and put that ahead of the public best interest.

Therefore I do wish to say, Mr. Speaker, that I commend the government on taking the initiative to reduce the number of members, but I urge them to give the commission full mandate, a full mandate to determine the boundaries, a full mandate to determine the number of seats and to develop a process for setting future election dates.

Now we do know that by reputation there are parties that have been seen as jumping on certain kinds of bandwagons from time to time, and it seems to go according to when someone's in opposition they feel one thing and when they're in government they feel another.

We have the official opposition wanting, by what they're stating these days, they want electoral fairness. And they have been dropping broad hints that this is important, to reduce the number of seats, regardless of what had been said in 1991. And I wish to take this

time to give credit where credit is due for them as well.

No matter what people can perceive these changes, these switches, to be, the proposal put forward by the member from Thunder Creek to realign the electoral boundaries so that the federal and provincial jurisdictions, constituencies, are more compatible and as a net result reduce the number of seats, no matter how late the conversion is to political reform, I believe that their proposal should indeed be evaluated by the Electoral Commission.

(1915)

In fact I can't understand why any open government, any honest government, any government that's truly interested in finding the best way to do things, wouldn't want all things considered as ideas on the table by the commission. This suggestion does have some merits and some possible problems perhaps, and in fairness, often solutions come from ideas which have to be reworked or revamped.

As long as this is left in the control of the party in power, the electoral boundaries being changed only through dictums from the party in power, there is tremendous potential for manipulation -- manipulation of the electorate, the people of this province, and for the advantage of government over the other parties. And this is not only unfair, Mr. Speaker, it is completely unnecessary and it must be stopped.

Now I strongly urge the government to give the Electoral Commission a **carte blanche**, and in the true sense of this term, in order that they can begin with a clean slate, a new page, and do the job as they see that it should be done, not as the government would like it to be. What we are doing in essence is saying to these respected individuals, whoever they may be -- and I have recommended from the Liberal Party someone who we see as someone very competent who could participate. This is someone . . . pardon me.

By doing what the government is doing, Mr. Speaker, they're in essence saying, pick any colour, as long as it's green; pick any number, as long as it's 58; do whatever you think best, as long as it's what the government thinks is best. And that's not empowerment. In fact people would say that's more like a dictatorship, and dictatorship has no place, no matter how subliminal, in a democracy.

Mr. Speaker, the final issue at hand here is efficiency and effectiveness. This is an area that I believe is extremely important but which has been sadly overlooked. And of course all parties are now supporting a reduction in the size of government. It's something that I campaigned on. Others are supporting it perhaps because it is politically saleable. Perhaps not. And luckily for the people of Saskatchewan, it also happens to make sense.

But there are other issues which should be part and parcel of this particular package of electoral reform. If we are going to have the good fortune of having an

arm's length body to determine something as crucial as our electoral boundaries, why would not also charge them with depoliticizing one or two other important decisions at the same time.

I believe that the commission should indeed be mandated to begin to set election dates and they should begin by being able to set the date for the next election. After elections are held, a boundaries commission, an objective body, could review the boundaries; they could set the time lines in terms of what would make most sense as far as population shifts, etc., for when these should in fact be reviewed.

They could review the boundaries, decide if changes are required, make recommendations, and subsequently set and announce the date for the election which would end that government's term in office. It would in fact take the manipulation again out of the system.

I believe that all citizens, including other political parties, should put forward ideas to the commission. What possible downside could there be, Mr. Speaker?

Unless of course a party in power is worried that this would ultimately turn out to be the chosen method of redrawing the boundaries and then goodness forbid, another political party would get credit. What hope do we ever have at changing this particular system in which we work with a mentality for people continuously wanting to call the shots?

Mr. Speaker, the issue of electoral boundary changes is not the most monumental issue before this legislature today. But it is of crucial importance to democracy, a word that people use far, far too lightly and take for granted. As the commission grapples with balancing fairness with equality and does its best to balance fairness with efficiency and fairness with effectiveness, the one thing which must not be compromised is integrity of process.

Now I do support the proposal of an electoral boundaries review, but I would very, very much like to see this particular government pull back what is being perceived by many as interference and over-control of the commission.

Earlier today the member from Thunder Creek brought forward an amendment and he was wanting, I think, to have us reflect for a time on the kinds of things that the government has, and has not, been doing. I find it most interesting, Mr. Speaker, to have pulled from my files the Saskatchewan New Democrat's caucus 1991 democratic reform paper on the Electoral Boundaries Commission. And I'm going to quote from this document, Mr. Speaker:

The people of Saskatchewan have always valued the ability to participate equally in the democratic process.

They believe that each and every person in Saskatchewan should be treated equally. In other words, the fundamental principle of one

person, one vote must be upheld.

I will interject here my own words and state that one of the things that I would like to do, Mr. Speaker, is to have an opportunity to present to the Electoral Boundaries Commission, once it is actually struck, a way of ensuring that we can have as close to one person, one vote, but also having a specific consideration for the specific differences between urban and rural ridings in Saskatchewan and I do have a suggestion for them.

Going back to this document from the New Democratic caucus, 1991, on electoral boundaries:

The legislation creating the 1988 Electoral Boundaries Commission violated that fundamental concept of fairness.

Instead, a set of rigid and unreasonable constraints on the development of electoral boundaries in the province were instituted.

The government thereby undermined the independence of the Boundaries Commission, and that's really what I've been talking about here this evening, Mr. Speaker, the need for us to ensure that this just doesn't appear to be a hands-off government from the commission, but that it be in fact; and that we can't simply say, because somebody did something in 1988 the way we didn't like, we're going to do our own version of it, but because we're pure, you don't have to worry.

I'm suggesting that perhaps the time has come that we truly have what's called an independent electoral boundaries commission, independent from the constraints of the government. And it really has come time in this province where people can have the sense that closure is going to be put on a manipulative government and that people in fact are going to have a chance for a change to see that some things are going to be done with their best interests at heart -- not the interests of the government, not the interests of the party in power, but the interests of the people.

A number of questions have surfaced as to whether the Saskatchewan Boundaries Commission will be able to redraw this electoral map in the province without any kind of obstruction whatsoever. And I indicated this week in questions to the Justice minister that in fact people have raised this because of articles that have appeared in newspapers throughout the province.

Now the minister states that the commission, and I quote him now: will work independently with no interference from government. End of quote.

And yet I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, that in fact there are many articles and specific statements from the minister that do indicate otherwise. And whether people take this seriously or not, the people take it seriously and we need to ensure that people have the sense that this entire change to the electoral boundaries is going to be done with sensitivity and

with honour and with real honesty.

In the May 19 edition of the *Lloydminster Times*, the minister is quoted as saying that his colleague from Cut Knife-Lloydminster would -- and this is a direct quote: "avoid the reaper if the legislation to cut eight MLAs was passed." In that same news item, Mr. Speaker, the minister says riding redistribution, and I quote: "won't make much of a difference here in Lloydminster." In the *Prince Albert Herald* on May 18, the Minister of Justice indicated that changes to the electoral map in Prince Albert will be, and I quote: minimal.

I believe the government, Mr. Speaker, is undermining an independent electoral boundaries commission and their job to determine how this electoral map should be redrawn. And I don't understand how people can see this as really unimportant in its content when these comments are made, because it is extremely important that people in this province have a sense that this particular commission is going to be able to do its job and that it's not a *fait accompli* of what's going to be in place, and who's going to be able to run where, and some people are protected, and others will be up for grabs.

It's not only the comments of the Justice minister that are disconcerting. There are also comments from his NDP (New Democratic Party) colleagues. The member I commented about earlier, from Moose Jaw Palliser, stated in the *Moose Jaw Times* on May 22 and I quote the hon. member: "It's certain that Moose Jaw will continue with at least (at least) two seats."

The NDP member from Saskatoon Idylwyld on a May 17 CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio program -- I quote:

The government has an obligation to accept the responsibility to decide how many members the legislature should have. That is how it has always been done.

This is an issue of reform, Mr. Speaker. It's about reform, member from Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain. So why is it that when the issue is reform, why is the fact that things have always been done a certain way is any basis for determining something that is of such great importance?

No governments in Canada have been considered by the electorate as unmanipulative when it comes to changing electoral boundaries. I mean politics is rife with people perceiving politicians and parties in power to do nothing but gerrymander.

Why would we want to do things the way that things have always been done? Why wouldn't we in this legislature and this new government for the last 19 months want to do something that is going to create and result in real reform? Perhaps if objective commissions had been empowered to determine the number of government members in the past, governments that we have across Canada would be considerably smaller.

Now the reason why I singled out the member from Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain was not because this individual member was on any radio program about this. It's because I know this particular member is interested in and committed to reform and

we have spoken about it at length. And we presented on the same panel at the Canadian taxpayers association first Canadian convention actually in Calgary. And I am pointing this out because one of the things that he is committed to is reform. And I don't believe that when he thinks in terms of reform, he thinks of reform as something that should simply do what has been done in the past. This is about an opportunity to do things better.

The government's fingerprints appear already on this commission, and that's the problem, because the government has indicated that there will be 58 seats established. They've indicated that the two northern ridings will remain unchanged. Government members have stated that any changes to Cut Knife-Lloydminster, Prince Albert, and Moose Jaw will be minimal. Comments such as these are not what I consider allowing a commission to work independently and in a manner which will, I think, result in what we need to have done.

And while we're on the topic of reform, electoral reform is very vital to ensure confidence of the voting public, but so too are other reforms, Mr. Speaker. And I find it rather ironic that the one thing that costs so little is reform, and the one thing that's been done very little by this government in 19 months is to implement reform.

Politicians of all stripes have received another black eye recently because of things that have transpired in this very Assembly, accusations alleged at one particular individual. And I think that one of the things that we have to do is to ensure that things like this can't occur in the future. And as you know, Mr. Speaker, this is the second time that something like this has resulted in this year alone, in the year of 1993. Only four months ago, reports surfaced indicating that there is an investigation into the spending practices of other members of this Legislative Assembly. So that includes now four people in this particular Assembly out of 66 members. That in itself is something that does not send a positive signal to the province of Saskatchewan and the people in it.

(1930)

Ordinary citizens all deserve consideration of being presumed innocent until they are found guilty of wrongdoing in a court of law. However, elected officials -- elected representatives -- are people who must adhere to a much higher standard than ordinary citizens and should ensure that their actions are not only impeccable but they are seen to be impeccable as well.

And the decisions that we make in this Assembly, the decisions made by government and the way that they are going to go about reform -- reform to the Board of

Internal Economy, reform to the Electoral Boundaries Commission, reform to the way that we look at a wide variety of things that really need to be addressed in this province and by this government and by all members -- the way in which that's done is what is going to begin to restore public trust.

The very fact that the government could have brought in their code of ethical conduct as well as the conflict of interest guidelines last year leaves one wondering why that has taken so long. Why is it that so much time will be taken in this Legislative Assembly ramming through legislation, not providing the kinds of opportunities for real reflection on the implications of legislation, when there's been a real decision made, an actual decision made, a solid, thoughtful decision made on the part of government, that somehow the code of ethical conduct and conflict of interest guidelines are not the number one priority? I find that rather surprising that we've now gone through three different sessions and this has not been something that to this day has come to some result.

There need to be specific guidelines. We need to ensure that people are held accountable from any misuse of power, even when such misuse is discovered after leaving office. And as it stands now, we know that there are loopholes in rules, there are routes that may be taken to circumvent different regulations, and we need to do all different kinds of things to ensure that every kind of reform that takes place is done to the very, very best of our ability, without doing it in some kind of surface way.

The people of Saskatchewan elected a new government, Mr. Speaker, on the promise of being new and being different. New and being different. But months and months have passed without any kind of addressing to the real issues of reform.

And I do want to give credit. The fact that annual reports are filed more regularly; there have been changes in terms of some public accountability with finances of this province -- I think those things are to be heralded.

But I think when we're talking about public trust, and we're talking about accountability, the people want to have that sense that: a) they are not only just listened to, they're heard; and that their politicians are exemplary in the way that they account for their own expenditures, the way that if there are going to be changes to things that affect their lives, like their own boundaries . . . which by the way doesn't affect urban members the same way. It doesn't affect urban citizens the same way when boundaries are changed, when there can only be a block between one's constituency in an urban centre and the next place. There's not that same sense as what happens in rural Saskatchewan.

And we have to be sensitive to those things, that people who live in rural Saskatchewan have an enormous sense of isolation. They can't be like business or labour, in cities, who can get the ear of government more readily. They are not like that in

rural Saskatchewan. They have to be able to have accessibility to their particular members and we have to have that kind of thing kept in mind when we're undergoing changes to the electoral boundaries Act.

When the people elected this new government some 19 months ago they did want something new and different. And I guess my sense is that the new and different is not turning out to be so new or so different. And this is a time of real opportunity to show that this particular commission will be independent, it will not be dictated to, and that in fact there will be a true opportunity for the kinds of changes to take place, as far as electoral reform is concerned, that will make a difference.

If we ever want to reduce the level of cynicism about politicians, about politics overall, then reform is one aspect of government which is going to be the key. And it's not good enough to simply allow things to carry on as they've always been. We have a chance to begin, piece by piece, member by member, in this Assembly to restore public confidence. And it's the government that has to take the leadership role to make positive change, change which would be very, very beneficial -- and as I stated earlier -- not cost Saskatchewan a dime.

I feel that the members of this Assembly should all be doing what is within our own power to ensure that all politicians are held accountable, that we can all be part of the process of ensuring that reform is addressed in a reformed manner, and that we can be above reproach.

We can participate in ensuring that things are done in a way that allows for the citizenry to feel that this is going to be done differently and that finally we're on the path to true reform, where the electoral boundaries will be done in a fair and equitable fashion, where they will be done by people who are honourable, that they're going to be done in such a way that people will see that there will be greater efficiency, greater effectiveness, they'll still have accessibility, and that what we've done is the best possible job on their behalf.

I will end, Mr. Speaker, by stating that every single day I meet people who talk about their sense of disillusionment. And they talk about politics as nothing but the trading off of different kinds of games. We do know that government does control the rules. They have definitely controlled what's been going on here today. There was one agreed-upon set of things that we would be discussing today, done this morning. There was then something else put on the order paper for this afternoon. People were quite prepared to not be talking about this particular issue but to get on with other issues. And it seems as though all agreements just fell aside.

That kind of thing does lead to disillusionment in people who are even in this legislature. Because with 55 members, the government does indeed have the control. But there is one thing -- two things actually -- which will continue to make the difference. And

that is if there's a real commitment to decency and civility of people in this legislature to each other and to the people we serve.

We have an opportunity, with the changes to the boundaries in this particular province, to demonstrate that we're committed as an entire group to true reform, that we're committed to ensuring that the independent commission is independent, that that commission will be allowed to entertain all people's points of view, including I think what is an excellent position being put forward by the official opposition, and that I hope it will consider some of my suggestions as well.

And what we have a real chance to do is to begin to introduce even more electoral reform besides the boundaries by setting election dates and taking away what has become what I consider to be a manipulation of the people's rights. Thank you.

Mr. Devine: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make a few comments, Mr. Speaker, about the Electoral Boundaries Commission and the procedure in which the government of the day is pretending to change the ridings in the province of Saskatchewan.

I want to spend a few minutes on the proposal put forward by the official opposition and my seat mates because I believe if this is about efficiency, Mr. Speaker, then the proposal that we have put forward is very efficient, saves money -- it's operated by the feds -- and it is eminently fairer than the position put forward by the members opposite.

We see under the guise of an excuse to be more cost saving and to save money, the NDP administration has now decided that they will reduce the number of MLAs in the fashion that they see fit. And I think it would be fair to say, Mr. Speaker, if you talked to the public, the general public out there today and you said, well do you think the NDP will redo the boundaries fairly in a non-partisan way, you'd probably get a laugh.

The general public would say: well as if; I'm sure; yes, right -- as if the NDP administration would actually redo the boundaries and be fair. In a non-partisan way, they wouldn't care about politics, they'd just be very, very fair. The public, Mr. Speaker, just doesn't buy that. That's why, when we look at this hurry to bring in this legislation -- and it's a whole term ahead, because normally it's every eight years and now they're doing it in three years -- you wonder what is their motive.

If their motive is to save money, then the proposal put forward by the PCs (Progressive Conservatives) and our official opposition is much better because it saves a great deal of money. If it is for fairness, both rural and urban, then our proposal is even fairer because it's based on federal ridings which are guaranteed across Canada, which means that we even get a larger share of our representation than other areas of the country because if it was one person, one vote, we'd be stuck with probably four or five federal ridings.

So we have an eminently fairer system working with the federal boundaries and it is very, very efficient because the federal government carries much of the burden of responsibility for redefining the boundaries every 10 years.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's rather interesting and the public is asking, well if this is to save money, if the NDP Bill here and this new Boundaries Commission is to save money, why don't they really save money and cooperate with the federal government and put the ridings, the provincial ridings, inside the boundaries of the federal ridings and leave the responsibility and the expense to the feds. We would see very, very fair distribution, rural and urban, as we see today; and we would certainly have the advantage of not worrying about rapid changes or any hard-core partisan politics because you'd be in federal boundaries that are already there that everybody has agreed are reasonably fair.

But, Mr. Speaker, the NDP says no, that isn't what we want. They don't want to save money evidently or they'd seriously even consider our proposal. But, Mr. Speaker, isn't it odd that they won't even consider a proposal which saves them more money and cooperates with the federal government, makes it that much easier to administer? They won't even consider it because they said, well there would be too much variance.

Well now that argument doesn't wash either, Mr. Speaker, because if you go back to one member, one vote, Saskatchewan would only have four or five seats. Is that fair? Is that what the NDP want? I don't think the NDP federally would support that. So if they can't find the consistency in their argument for one member, one vote, federally versus provincially, if our suggestion even saves them more money but they don't buy that.

Then they flip and say, well we'll just have to do it our way and we won't look at any other options. Then people are going to have to reinforce their belief that the NDP are just using this cost-saving excuse to gerrymander the ridings, to eliminate rural ridings, and to try and hang on to one more term of government by consolidating their support in urban centres that they think can keep them in government.

And we've heard over and over and over again, they'll go to . . . and the Attorney General has gone to certain ridings and said, yours is safe in Moose Jaw, yours is safe in Prince Albert, yours will be safe in Lloydminster, this urban seat will be fine, these urban seats. He hasn't done that in the country, Mr. Speaker. You don't see him going around saying, we will be non-partisan; we will be very fair. No, he goes in and he speaks riding by riding where they hope to hang on to power, and he says, but Moose Jaw, you won't be touched; and P.A. (Prince Albert), you won't be touched; Lloydminster, you won't be touched, you'll be okay under the new NDP system. And then he thinks that people will believe they're doing this on the basis of cost saving?

(1945)

Makes no sense. People don't believe the NDP will allow any commission -- any commission -- to set new boundaries without political guidance. And the public generally believes the maps are already drawn, the caucus has already looked at it, the cabinet ministers have got them up on the wall and everybody's saying well, if we did this and this and this, it'd be fine.

And we can use the excuse we're saving money. That'll be it -- we're saving money for the public and the taxpayers, and we'll do this after three years. Normally it's eight, normally it's eight, but we'll do it after three. And we'll say, oh well, we have to because there's a deficit.

And people are starting to say, as you hear, Mr. Speaker, from the gallery, from the streets, from the towns and the villages, rural and urban, they're saying: we don't believe the NDP; we don't trust the NDP; they are not fair; they're not conducting themselves in an open fashion; they're not doing what they said they would do.

Even the simplest thing that they campaigned on, the fact that there was a terrible deficit under the Devine administration, a terrible deficit -- campaigned on that. And then they turn around with a \$400 million bribe to get elected. They had an extra 400 million. We'll just give that away, and it'll be okay. We'll still balance the budget and we'll give you lots more in health and education and protect the rural and protect the sick, and give you more.

Well what about the deficit? Oh well, we'll fix that. I know it's huge, but we'll just give you 400 million. Here's a bribe -- no provincial sales tax, no harmonization. We'll just give you that money and trust us, it'll be fine. And now two years later, two years later, they're saying: well we'd just like to redo the boundaries here a little bit to save you some money.

They just gave away \$400 million in a bribe to get elected, and they're saying: but I tell you, to save some money what we really have to do is redo the boundaries because that would be really instrumental in us balancing the budget. Do you believe us so far? Do you believe us so far?

And the people are shaking their heads, whether you go down to the mall on south Albert or whether you go to Victoria Square Mall, or whether you're in Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Estevan, Weyburn, Macklin, any place. They say no, I don't believe the NDP. They didn't get elected on telling it as it is. And when they get in power, they hurt every single person in Saskatchewan except those that they've propped up with patronage. And we've got lots of evidence of that, Mr. Speaker.

So on the efficiency grounds, their proposal doesn't hold up. It's not as good as ours and all we've asked is

it just even have the perception of fairness. Would you consider ours which includes the federal ridings? Divide each of the federal ridings into four provincial ridings; give us 56 seats. That is more efficient than yours by two, and you can't monkey with it. There's no gerrymandering, and it costs less because the feds redo it every 10 years.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you'd think that they would be . . . the NDP would be ashamed not to at least consider the option; just give it a fair hearing. But they say no, can't do that. No. So, Mr. Speaker, I think I've made my point that the NDP are not doing this because of fairness, they're not doing it because of efficiency, they're not doing it to save money.

And nobody believes this. Certainly the PCs don't believe it, the Liberals don't believe it. And frankly, the NDP, when you corner them, they don't believe it either. They say, well hey, we got to do this. We're in some trouble. We've got a big excuse. We got to say, hey there's a deficit. We'll cut the number of MLAs, save a bunch of money, and they think that the public will buy it. And they know the public doesn't buy it. Their own ridings don't buy it, their campaign managers, their presidents, their spouses, their wives, and their husbands don't buy it. And they say, nobody's going to believe this. Who do you think you're kidding?

They must believe that there are people out there who believe them -- but there aren't. The partisans say, go for it, do it. Just do it anyway. Just go for it; we'll have enough seats just to squeak by. And the rest of the public says, you promised you'd be different; you promised you'd be open; you promised you would have fairness; you promised you'd open the books; you promised you'd be non-partisan; you promised no patronage; you promised you'd help farmers; you promised to reduce the food banks, eliminate food banks; you promised you'd have more money in health; you promised no tax increases. And you can't say: hear, hear; hear, hear; because you didn't do any of those things. You've denied people access all . . .

An Hon. Member: -- Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: -- That's right, hear . . . You finally . . . That's right. You've denied people access to health care. You denied them support in agriculture. You denied them all of the things that they thought that they may get under a new administration. You have let them down.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the Progressive Conservative proposal on new boundaries in the province of Saskatchewan, if we base it on the federal boundaries -- 14 seats, and each riding is divided into four seats with equal population, we'd have 56 seats -- we'd have very close, close to one person, one vote, with margins that could range as much as 5 per cent and up to 25 per cent, and the feds are at 5 per cent now. So that isn't difficult. And if you needed a little bit more, you could

be there, but it would still be eminently fair because those 14 federal ridings are all across the province of Saskatchewan and you could have it as fair as you could imagine. And the feds would bear most of the cost.

So again, with all the fairness and all the cost-saving measures that are associated with that proposal I would sincerely ask -- and have the public know -- that if they want a very fair system that saves money and that helps the public, and is much more efficient, that they could ask the NDP MLAs, and the NDP cabinet, and the NDP Premier, to consider a system like that or else give us the very good reasons why they shouldn't do that, why they shouldn't consider it.

Mr. Speaker, in their attempts to salvage and retain power in one more term, the NDP have really picked on rural people. We know, Mr. Speaker, if you look at population basis, the population in rural Saskatchewan, in towns and villages, farms, is suffering the most in the province of Saskatchewan. People are leaving farms, people are leaving smaller cities, towns, and villages.

These people have suffered a very large extent under the NDP government. And now, Mr. Speaker, what we look at is the ultimate in damage to people, is to take away their right to have fair representation in their government. Rural people will be denied fair representation because as you cut seats and ridings under the NDP plan, you are going to cut where the population has been under the most pressure. And the population has been under the most pressure where the NDP have put them under their thumb.

Over and over and over again, the NDP administration has put their thumb on rural people and squeezed them and forced them out, caused them to suffer. And these then will be the very areas where they will say, well as a result of our cost-saving measures and as a result of what's going on in population, we got to take away your riding.

Now imagine that, Mr. Speaker. And they joke about it and they laugh and say, well these people have . . . too bad, they've lost all their support, they've lost their farm programs and their hospitals and their health care and their roads and their bus services. And isn't it interesting and isn't it kind of strange, we're losing population in the rural as soon as the NDP get elected.

And when the population is really falling and really diving and people under terrible stress and terrible pain, terrible suffering, the NDP, after 18 months say, I guess we'll bring in a new boundaries commission so that we will have new ridings. And if in fact there just happens to be less people in the country, whoops, sorry, I guess you won't have to have an MLA. And people believe that the NDP have consciously planned at this time, under the excuse of cost savings, to remove those rural seats just so rural people won't have an impact at election time like they should and have fairness like other people across Canada.

And the NDP laugh about that and they snicker. Well I'll tell you, members of the legislature, you'll have to face not only the people, but you'll have to face your conscience when you look back and say, we did this

to Saskatchewan people, our neighbours -- in fact, our friends and our families -- that have had to suffer through this and then end up with no representation in the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we have a long list of things that the NDP have done to hurt rural population that has resulted in this now excuse to cut them off from having a member of the legislature. People have been hurt, and people are now leaving their towns and villages as a result of NDP policy. And in the middle of this wellness program and their so-called agriculture support programs and all of their other taxation programs, they just happened to get the idea that now we'll remove the number of seats in rural Saskatchewan so that they won't even have a vote.

It's shameful, it's pathetic, and it's sad to think of even the once-proud CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) party that represented rural people would do this -- the CCF would pick on rural people, the salt of the earth, those that were pioneers, that broke the land, built the first schools, built the first churches, were our parents and grandparents.

And now the so-called next party to the CCF, the NDP, said, well we'll abandon the rural life of Saskatchewan. We'll just turn our back on it; in fact, we'll pick on it. It's just shameful. It's pathetic. I mean the seniors in the CCF party that are out there today and tonight are saying, I agree. I mean it is awful the way that the NDP are treating rural people.

You couldn't find a CCF member of the legislature that would do what you're doing in here. And not only this Bill but all kinds of Bills and I'm going to read a few of them because it's the pain to rural people that you are revelling in and rubbing your hands and making all these catcalls on and say, yes we'll get elected, Grant; it will be okay.

Well on the backs of what? Your reputation, the backs of your party and the backs of the reputation of good, solid, rural people who built schools, co-ops, 4-H, the very backbone and the spirit of this province -- and you're saying no, I'll abandon you. It is pathetic and it's sad and it's the absolute truth because that's what you're doing.

Rural population is going down like it's never gone down since the 1930s and you've cut support. And people voted for you for help and you said yes, we'll be there. I promise, you said. The man from Riversdale and the rest of you said, I promise I'll be there, better than the Tories, better than anybody else; I'll stick up for you. And when you're elected after 18 months, you've just cut their heart out . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Hear, hear, what?

Listen to them laugh. Listen to them laugh, Mr. Speaker. I wish the television cameras could go across here and listen to them laugh at the pain and suffering in rural Saskatchewan. They think it's a joke.

An Hon. member: -- Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Speaker: -- What's the member's point of order?

Mr. Pringle: -- Mr. Speaker, my point of order, now four times the member has talked about government members laughing at this serious matter and, Mr. Speaker, he's making that up. This is just simply not happening and so I would ask you to . . . request that you ask the member from Estevan not to make things up that aren't happening in the House.

The Speaker: -- Order, order. The member's point of order is not well taken.

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Neudorf: -- On that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: -- I already ruled. The member's point of order was not well taken.

An Hon. Member: -- That's for sure.

The Speaker: -- Order.

(2000)

Mr. Devine: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a good ruling. And they're still laughing, Mr. Speaker. They're still laughing.

They'll laugh at rural people. They laugh at their roots. They laugh at the children and the seniors and those that have to be uprooted and leave the province and leave their homes, leave their towns, leave their villages. What about their families?

I think I've heard before, Mr. Speaker, in this Legislative Assembly the NDP standing up and saying, what about the families of people who would have to move to another town? And they condemned that. They said, but the families would have to move. It was all right if they moved to Regina; didn't worry about those families. But they talked about how the NDP will be so kind to families and to children and to CCF seniors and to senior citizens. We'll be so kind. We promise, they say. We'll keep your hospitals open, your schools open, the bus lines open. We'll keep the co-ops open. We'll defend you; we'll defend you; we'll defend you. Not one word did they say, but we'll raise your taxes and cut your hospitals, cut your schools, attack your co-ops, kick your people out of towns, run against business.

Mr. Speaker, they have reneged and they have beat on people something fierce since they got elected. And in here all they can do at 8 o'clock at night, towards the end of the session when they're all anxious to get out of here and go home and hide, is laugh at the people, laugh at the people. They're sitting there laughing and they're over here laughing. Mr. Speaker, it's pathetic . . .

An Hon. Member: -- Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Speaker: -- What's the member's point of order?

Mr. Pringle: -- For the last 10 minutes the member from Estevan has not even mentioned the Bill under discussion here tonight. This is electoral boundaries Bill and he's not even mentioned it for 10 minutes, and I would request that you ask him to stick to the Bill, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: -- Order. I want to remind members that there is an amendment to the motion which reads:

That Bill 79 not now be read a second time because the principles contained in the Bill reinforce the recent trend of legislative action against the fundamental values of Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: -- Order. I assume that the member from Estevan will connect this with the recent things that have been happening in the legislature, and I don't think the member's point . . . Order. I don't think the member's point of order is well taken.

Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, it doesn't take much imagination to know that the CCF values that people at one point in time were proud of was defending rural people, including their right to vote, including their right to raise children in the country -- in the country, a beautiful place to raise a family.

And my point is, on the backs of this pain initiated by this NDP government with a CCF legacy, they are now even taking away the people's right to vote. And that's shameful and that's an awful Bill.

And you'll pass it and you'll be proud of it, but I'll tell you, you'll have to look at yourself in the mirror and you'll have to look back years from now and say, did I do what was right for the people of Saskatchewan. Is that fair to the people of Saskatchewan to be that harmful to their communities and that harmful to their families. And then when they've lost hope and lost population -- they move away -- and say, I will take away your right to vote. I can't think of a CCFer that would have done that.

And that's my point, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe, in the tradition of Saskatchewan, this NDP government is even close to the CCF in terms of values. CCF had some compassion and they cared.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: -- And you can say, "hear, hear" to that, and that's correct. And they got elected on that basis.

And the NDP are entirely something else because they promise they're like the CCF. They say we're the same party, just had to change our name. And then when they get elected, Mr. Speaker, what do they do? They are not like the CCF at all.

And because they're in a lot of trouble and because they think they have an excuse on efficiency, they said, we'd better, after 18 months in power, make

some new ridings because we're going to need all the help we can get. What other reason after 18 months would you be going through this exercise, picking on rural people? What other reason?

They haven't got one. They've just got smiles. They just sit there and they know full well it's all politics, all just to survive. After they've taken away the dental program, after they've taken away chiropractic coverage, the prescription drug plan, insulin and oxygen coverage, closed the hospitals, kicked out the doctors, the druggists go, rip up roads, take away the bus service, close the school, take away their pension plans, the senior citizen's heritage fund, the farm programs, no GRIP (gross revenue income program), no farm support, on top of all that, what do they do? They take away the man and woman's right to vote.

And they expect the public to feel good about this and this is going to save a bunch of money. This isn't about money at all because we filled out a proposal here that would protect rural people so they have a vote, and it's decent and it's fair, based on federal ridings. And they won't even listen to it. They won't even consider it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've seen some really odd things in this Legislative Assembly in the last 18 months. We've seen closure upon closure. We've seen rule changes. We've seen a Minister of Finance here during estimates couldn't even respond because of the confounding rules. First time in the history of probably the British Commonwealth. The Minister of Finance couldn't get up because if he got up he could never get down because of his own rules. It's unbelievable.

And then they admit afterwards: I shouldn't have even touched this, I shouldn't have even done that. They didn't know what they were doing from the seat of their pants. And on top of that, and on top of that . . . And they laugh -- listen to them laugh at the confusion and the pain and the suffering and the fear all over the province.

I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, people aren't laughing when you see headlines like this: The NDP is losing credibility in health care. They're not laughing. The public isn't laughing.

And you look at the wellness model headlines like this. What a farce -- NDP policy. Do you think people are building trust to let you redo the ridings, given headlines like that?

Here's another one: Minister should pay for dividends or pay for his friends. He's hiring his friends in Crown corporations. Said he'd never do that.

The public is saying, well the NDP promised. Attorney General says no patronage, we've come clean. Do you think with headlines like that they're going to trust you to redo boundaries fairly? You got to be smoking wacky weed to believe it.

University funding cuts hurt women. Look at this one,

Mr. Speaker: Despite wellness model, Eston is sick with anxiety on health care. Shock and anger on health care. Closure upsets staff and patients.

Mr. Speaker, if the NDP administration was meeting with favour in the public and wasn't under so much political pressures, and they weren't in free fall of public support, and they weren't doing so many vindictive things to rural people and to health care people and to co-ops and to seniors and to labour and to natives and Indians, then we could believe well maybe they're just . . . they really think that this would be the right thing to do.

But that's not the case. They're under so much pressure, making so many mistakes, breaking so many promises that clearly people believe that they are scrambling to stay alive. Because why after 18 months would you all of a sudden have to change the ridings?

Something is up. What's going on over there? It's normally every eight years you do this. And you can't show anybody that this saves a bunch of money. And the waste that you have, even in supporting your hacks and giving them wage increases and the large cabinet that you promised you'd never have, is much more saving than these boundaries.

And if you really did want boundaries savings, you'd adopt our proposal that works with the federal government, that gives you very fair boundaries and two less seats than you have. So it isn't that.

So you'll pass this. And you'll run home and hide. And you'll tell everybody, oh we really pulled one over on the people. And you'll try to survive another election.

Look at this one, Mr. Speaker: Rural Saskatchewan scared sick. And then you're saying to rural people, well I know you're scared sick and you have anxiety and you're closing your hospitals and you're ripping up this and that and we don't have any farm support, but trust us; we'll rejig the ridings so that you'll have a lot of support. You'll get a good, fair hearing and you'll get lots of votes. And they laugh. They sit in their seats and they laugh at rural people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there's nothing, there's absolutely nothing that we have seen in this Legislative Assembly in terms of fairness, in terms of justice, in terms of equal opportunity, one person one vote, or fairness in terms of ridings that would lead anybody in their right mind to believe that the NDP are doing anything close to what is right and correct in this Bill.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, is a disaster. It's the epitome in terms of trying to hang on to power with your fingernails. There is no justification for what they're doing on any basis that we can find.

Mr. Speaker, when they do pass this Bill and they say to themselves, well now we've really been fair and we've really helped a lot of people, and this will be eminently the model to use on national boundary commissions or international boundary commissions, no one in the province is going to believe them, Mr.

Speaker. This is not a model; this is a disaster.

I can only say in wrapping up my comments, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan have a sense of fairness and decency. And when the people of Saskatchewan elect a government, they expect them to be decent, fair individuals. They understand politics but they expect fairness and decency and honesty. And if you want to design boundaries in a non-partisan sense to reform, they'd say: fair enough; but then prove to us that it is non-partisan.

And all the actions we've seen here in the NDP administration with higher and higher deficits, lower and lower credit ratings, and broken promises and broken hearts and broken wills, and the children and the seniors and others that are suffering as a result of the NDP, none of that would lead us to believe that the public has confidence in the NDP government designing and redesigning boundaries.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly support the amendment to this Bill. And I would support any arguments that say, let's back off this change. Because the façade of efficiency and cost saving is not there, and there certainly isn't fairness seen in the NDP administration. And the public, Mr. Speaker, wants to know that if you are going to gerrymander so that you're going to get the same government over and over even if you don't want them . . . that's the farthest thing from their mind.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make it very, very clear, I think it's a sad, sad day in the province of Saskatchewan when this kind of Bill comes forward after 18 months of boondoggles and misinformation and half-truths and renegeing on promises. I think it's a pathetic, pathetic show of non-courage, non-foresight; and it really tells us that the NDP were elected for one reason and one reason only, and that's partisan politics -- win at all cost, and then stay in power at all costs. And I hope they reap what they sow, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(2015)

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at times when we find ourselves in the legislature, there's times when we'd like to speak to Bills and there's times when we'd not like to speak to Bills, Mr. Speaker. And I think this is one of those times when we are forced into a situation of speaking to a Bill that is very, very poor, a Bill that's been brought forward by a discredited government, a government that continues to amaze, absolutely continues to amaze the people of Saskatchewan.

You go from one jackpot to another. I don't know when it's going to end. One jackpot to another. First of all, when you get in here you do everything possible to hurt rural Saskatchewan, and then you stand up and tell us that it's all in the interests -- the best interests -- of the people of Saskatchewan in general. It's amazing.

We've seen such dramatic things happen in rural Saskatchewan, to rural Saskatchewan, and these people, back-bench MLAs, still maintain that they support rural Saskatchewan and represent rural Saskatchewan. There isn't a single one of you back-bench MLAs that have done one thing for your constituency since the day you were sworn into office into this place. Not one thing, Mr. Speaker, have they done for their constituencies.

You just look at the things that have happened to rural Saskatchewan since you people have took office. Just look at them. You cut off their hospitals, rip farm support away from them, take away almost everything that can possibly be taken away from them, and now you want to take away their vote so that they can't get back at you. That's what it is. That's what it's all about, isn't it? You know damn well you're in a jackpot here. You know very, very well that you are in trouble politically and therefore the only way to stop the people of rural Saskatchewan from taking you out of office next time around is disenfranchise them, Mr. Speaker; make it so that they can't speak up in the face of democracy. Make it so that they cannot have a voice. Make it so that they can't throw you out of office.

But it's interesting. I see all these NDP back-bench MLAs supporting this thing, and their seat is going to disappear. Which ones will be left, I wonder, Mr. Speaker. Which ones will be left? Shaunavon will be gone for sure, guaranteed. *Adios, amigo*. It's done. Everyone knows that one's gone. And that guy he's . . . That's fine anyway because he doesn't go home anyway. He tells us privately he doesn't go home any more because they roast him royally when he does go home, Mr. Speaker. That's what happens to him when he heads out that way.

It'll be interesting, Mr. Speaker. The member for Maple Creek, he'll be representing everything from the South Saskatchewan to the American border, and I'll be representing everything from the South Saskatchewan to the Athabasca before long, Mr. Speaker. That's what'll happen on the western side of the province. We'll have constituencies over there triple the size of some of the ones -- square-miles wise -- compared to other constituencies in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, not only that, we'll be representing constituencies with such vast size I don't know how we'll be able to get around them. And they always use the argument, they always use the argument that that's the concern about the two northern seats -- very thinly populated, few people. That's right. Why does that argument apply in those situations but when you look at other situations it doesn't apply any longer? What is the reason? What compels you people to continue along this line? What compels you to continue along this line? Have you got some kind of a death wish electorally or what?

It amazes me, Mr. Speaker, that they continue going down this path. We saw the health care reform, Mr.

Speaker, that was forced on the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. And the kind of thing that we see -- health care reform -- we had huge, huge public rallies out on the western side of the province and it wasn't only directed at health care, the concern, Mr. Speaker. The concern was about the kinds of things that's happening to rural Saskatchewan in general.

Sixteen hundred people. Sixteen hundred people turned up at a public meeting in my home town, Mr. Speaker, 1,600 people. That's more than the whole community and area has. There's people came in from a distance to go to that public meeting and vent their rage with this government on health care reform and on a whole host of other issues, Mr. Speaker. That night, that night, Mr. Speaker, when they had an opportunity to question the ministers, they touched on a whole host of areas and electoral reform was just one of them, Mr. Speaker.

They take away their hospital. They take away everything that they can get their hands on, Mr. Speaker. Now they want to take their vote, Mr. Speaker. Not only that but they wanted to . . . for a little while the member from Rosetown-Elrose was even going to rip up the highways so they couldn't even get out any more, out of rural Saskatchewan if they wanted, Mr. Speaker.

And fortunately, fortunately . . . I don't know which one of you had the good sense to put the kibosh on that. It'd be interesting to . . . it had been an interesting day to be in caucus, I'll bet -- or cabinet, Mr. Speaker -- when the decision to reverse that was. It probably went something like this: which one of you kooks come up with this idea?

The Speaker: -- I think the member is treading on pretty dangerous grounds when he refers to people in this legislature as kooks, and I'd ask him to withdraw the remark and get back to parliamentary language.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that.

Mr. Speaker, we can only think, us in the opposition, Mr. Speaker, and people in general in rural Saskatchewan can only feel that the . . . what is happening to rural Saskatchewan is something that we cannot agree with. I think the people of rural Saskatchewan do not agree with what's happening, Mr. Speaker. I think the people . . . any fair-minded person in Saskatchewan does not agree with what's going on in this legislature as far as the changes that this government is putting forward, Mr. Speaker.

Any time that this government, any time that this government feels that they are threatened, for whatever reason, they bring in legislation to deal with it. That is their solution to everything, Mr. Speaker. Power for power's sake -- that's how they deal with their concerns, Mr. Speaker. Every time we see something that they feel is a threat, real or perceived, they bring in a piece of legislation to deal with it, Mr. Speaker.

And they realize more and more and more as their

rural members sneak back into their constituencies in the dead of the night, Mr. Speaker, on the weekends, they find that they come back and they tell them, we're in big trouble. We're in big trouble in rural Saskatchewan.

So the way you deal with it is the same way you deal with every other problem you had, you legislate it out of existence. Legislate the problem out of existence, Mr. Speaker.

That's what's happened. That's the legacy that we have seen of this government in 18, 19 months, Mr. Speaker. We've seen them legislate against personal contracts of people, former employees of the government, Mr. Speaker. We've seen them legislate against farmers, Mr. Speaker, because they realize that the farm community didn't support them. The farm community didn't support them in the last election, Mr. Speaker; they realized that so they had to do something to hurt them.

They had to do something to put forward a platform of revenge on those people, Mr. Speaker. So they took away the lifeblood of rural Saskatchewan when they changed the GRIP contract. They took away the opportunity for them to have some kind of economic hope in rural Saskatchewan.

And every farmer, every single farmer in rural Saskatchewan, they just have to look at the difference between '91 and '92 and they realize the significant difference that there was in the amount of coverage that they had, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: -- Order. I notice members are turning the mikes on their desks. Tomorrow a number of those mikes will not be in operation. They will not respond. And we're going to have some difficulties in the legislature, and I'm asking members please not to turn the mikes on their desks.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they had to legislate against the farmers because they felt the farmers, at some point, would bite back, and that would be the next opportunity that there was an election, Mr. Speaker, so they legislated against them.

Then they had to look at some other things that they needed to do. They are going on a platform of revenge in rural Saskatchewan, unprecedented revenge. I just have to look at the constituency that I represent, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how many things more you can do to the constituency of Kindersley.

I just look at the community of Eston as an example, Mr. Speaker. And I'll just lay out a few examples of what I consider political revenge on my constituency because I live at Eston. And here's a couple examples, Mr. Speaker.

In one day -- this is an example of what happened in one day in my constituency -- they announced in the morning that they were going to take away the

hospital for that community. Fourteen hundred people live in Eston. They're going to take away the hospital, downsize it up, do whatever you want to talk about, convert it, you name it. They were going to downsize that thing out of existence, Mr. Speaker.

Later on in the day we found out in that community that we were going to be losing every single penny -- every single penny -- of money that was directed to the regional park. It wasn't a great deal of money -- \$14,000 -- but it was the amount of money that the lifeblood of that park lived on, I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker. Fourteen thousand dollars.

I happened to talk to the chairman of the board of that regional park and he tells me that that happened on the same day. In fact I saw the copy of the letter -- he provided it to me -- of notice from the department. Fourteen thousand dollars. So that was the second hit that day.

And the third one, Mr. Speaker, was they came in and told them that the bus line for that area would no longer be continuing. In one day, in one day, you've effectively closed the hospital, you've effectively closed the regional park, and you've effectively stripped away the bus-line service to that community. In one day.

In one day that's the kind of devastation you people have imposed on a community in rural Saskatchewan. One day. And it doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. Doesn't stop there either. It just goes on and on and on, the saga.

Another thing that happened to that community just a little while ago, Mr. Speaker . . . They have a baseball team out there and a hockey team out there called the Eston Ramblers. Hockey team, Eston Ramblers. Baseball team, Eston Ramblers. You may be familiar with them, Mr. Speaker. They play in the Saskatchewan major baseball league. And they also play in the Wild Goose Hockey League.

In one day, Mr. Speaker, as well, they said to those people . . . they wanted to put on a fund-raising bingo, Mr. Speaker, something that goes on in rural Saskatchewan all the time, to help small sports franchises keep alive, community-based sports franchises. Wanted to put on a community bingo.

So they went to the people that are in charge of giving out licences for that function, Mr. Speaker, and they denied it to them. They've held a bingo in that community for as long as I can remember -- as long as I can remember -- to raise funds for the hockey team and the baseball team. And now they can't do that. Now they can't do that, Mr. Speaker.

Because this government looks at that community and says, they elected a PC member; we are going to make sure they pay. We are going to make sure they pay in spades, Mr. Speaker. And the list goes on and on and on and on of political revenge, political revenge that has been imposed on that community and that constituency, Mr. Speaker.

They were going to rip up the highway, they were

going to rip up the highway south of Eston. That was on the list that was going to be brought forward. And I wonder what the rationale was for that, Mr. Speaker. Was it because the member for Kindersley just happens to live there, Mr. Speaker? Another example of political revenge by this party. Another example of political revenge.

So we see them wanting to tear the highway out, wanting to cut the bus line off, cut the hospital out, take away the regional park, take away fund-raising bingos.

Mr. Speaker, they sit and laugh. Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, the people of that community sure aren't laughing. The people of that constituency sure aren't laughing about what's happening to them, Mr. Speaker. It goes on and on and on.

And then recently, Mr. Speaker, here is probably the crowning glory of all of the stupidity that could be hoisted upon this constituency, Mr. Speaker -- the crowning glory. Not less than . . . it was, I believe, about two, maybe three years ago in the town of Eston, Mr. Speaker, the people of that town got together, municipal council and town council, decided that what they were going to do was build a new clinic, Mr. Speaker. The clinic that was there previous to that was an old building and in fairly serious state of disrepair, Mr. Speaker. And they decided they were going to build a new clinic.

So they did. They got together the two levels of government, Mr. Speaker, got together and they raised enough money between the two -- the municipality and the town council -- and then they put a special levy on for the municipal property and town property, raised enough money to build that clinic. I think it was something in the order of \$600,000 over a couple of years they put together, Mr. Speaker. Put together \$600,000, built a beautiful clinic, Mr. Speaker.

(2030)

As a result of that new clinic, we've been able to attract a new dentist to the community -- a young fellow that was born and raised and educated in Eston, went on to dental college in Saskatoon and then came back to practise his profession in that community. And he wouldn't have, had it not been for that new clinic being built because there wasn't any facilities for him, Mr. Speaker.

So they built that clinic; beautiful thing built onto the hospital, which incidentally is a very, very sound structure. It was built, I believe, in '57, Mr. Speaker. The building is in excellent repair still. So they built this new clinic onto the hospital, Mr. Speaker. And everyone thought that the health care services in that community were absolutely guaranteed and secure at that point because they had finally corrected the one thing that was wrong. The clinic was needed desperately, so they corrected that one problem. And the people of that community thought everything would be fine, Mr. Speaker.

And what happened in the last few days? And the member from Biggar, he would know this because he was out there talking to the people out there. They came to them, they came to them now and said to the people of Eston -- if you can imagine this, Mr. Speaker -- that they are going to . . . One of the proposals that they have is to shut the hospital down, the other one is to physically pick up that new clinic -- big brick structure, beautiful building -- physically pick up that structure and move it two blocks down the street and hook it onto the nursing home. And the people of that community look at them and think they have completely lost their minds, Mr. Speaker, when they want to do something so absurd as pick up the building and physically move it two blocks down the street and add it onto the nursing home. What would possess anyone to think that that is some kind of a rational way of utilizing the health care dollars?

They had a construction moving company -- I think it was Wiebe's out of Saskatoon -- come out and give them a quotation of \$100,000 to pick that building up and move it two blocks down the street to satisfy the whims of the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker. Can anyone believe that, Mr. Speaker? What would be the possible reason why you would want to do that -- a building that's sitting in one location, move it to another location two blocks down the street?

An Hon. Member: -- Who told you that, Bill? Who told you that?

Mr. Boyd: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, one member's chirping from her seat: who told me that. Well I'll tell you who told me that, the chairman of the board of the health care district, that's who told me. That was one of the proposals that your government brought forward.

And then, Mr. Speaker, so they bring in a few of the back-bench MLAs, I think the Associate Minister of Health came out to that community, and I think Biggar was out there and a couple of other MLAs that day. And they came into that community and what did they do, Mr. Speaker? Rather than meeting with the people of that community, they decided what they had to do was try and shore things up a little bit politically that day, Mr. Speaker.

So they came in, snuck into town. Nobody knew they were coming. Snuck into town, had a little, private little audience with a few of the big-time NDPers in the constituency, trying to pump a little sand into their backbone to get them to go along with all of this, Mr. Speaker. And I don't know what the results of that meeting were that day, Mr. Speaker, but my guess is that even the NDP people in that town are looking at you people and saying, shame on you. Shame on you for the kinds of things that you are doing to that community. Shame on you for taking away their hospital. Shame on you for taking away their bus line. Shame on you for taking away their regional park funding. Shame on you for wanting to rip up their highway. And now shame on you for wanting to tear that building out of one location and move it to the other location.

That's like, Mr. Speaker, because you don't happen to like the street you live on, picking your house up and moving it down the street a few blocks just to get a different view. That's all that would be accomplished, Mr. Speaker, by doing that. That's all that would be accomplished by doing that, taking that building and moving it from one spot to another. Get a little different view on things. That's all that would happen, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the member from Biggar, he was there that day. What did they tell you? What did they tell you, Mr. Member from Biggar? What did the people of Eston say to you that day I wonder? I'll bet they said you don't know what you are doing in government any longer. You guys have lost complete control of what you're doing. You guys are listening to the front benches on that constituency and there isn't a one of you back-bench MLAs that has the ability or the intestinal fortitude to stand up in your caucus and say no. Not one of you.

Not a single one of you other than perhaps the member from Regina Rosemont who we saw here the other day was the only one, the only one to date that's had the courage to stand up to his convictions. Although misguided as they are, nevertheless he stood up for the views that he holds, Mr. Speaker. The normally ill-informed member, he at least put forward what he thought was the view that was representative of his constituents, Mr. Speaker, and the people that he represented here that day in the gallery right behind us, Mr. Speaker, union leaders from all over this province.

And what happened after, Mr. Speaker? That was an interesting day. I haven't seen anything like it.

The Speaker: -- Order, order. I want to remind members, although this is a wide-ranging debate, he can't go into details on those various items and not relate them to the Bill. So I'd like to make sure that he directs them to the Bill and to the amendments.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what it shows, what it shows quite clearly is a developing trend by this government, a developing trend of trying to rip away support from one area of Saskatchewan and deliver it to another area of Saskatchewan. A trend that is trying to protect that fragile, very, very fragile political situation that they find themselves in, Mr. Speaker. That's the trend that it shows.

And on that day when the member from Regina Rosemont tried to introduce a piece of legislation into this Assembly, every single one of the NDP MLAs voted against it that day. And it was quite a thing to behold, Mr. Speaker. And union members, man, were they ever mad up in that gallery. Do you recall that, Mr. Speaker? And it's a type of trend that we are seeing from this government. It just goes on and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and what happened was, as each one of

them, as each one of them dared to go out into the rotunda out front here, they were royally roasted by those union people that day. I'll never forget it. I stood around out there for a little while, Mr. Speaker, and watched the fun. And man, was it something to behold, Mr. Speaker.

When NDP people who probably were as partisan of supporters of you people as there ever has been, as they're probably as strong a supporter that you ever got, when they say to you and confront, look you right straight in the eye, Mr. Member from Biggar, when you walked out there, when they looked you right straight in the eye . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. I have to remind the member that that has nothing to do with the amendment or the Bill that is before us. And I wish the member would get back to the amendment and not get into details on something that happened outside this House, which has nothing to do with the Bill. I ask the member to get back to the Bill and to the amendment.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll try and illustrate a little bit more clearly than how those things are associated with the Bill. Mr. Speaker, I think what it shows is that this government will do anything in its power to get its way.

A clear trend has developed right from the day they took office, Mr. Speaker. A clear trend that has shown that they are not in touch with the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. A clear trend that shows that they are trying to put forward a platform of revenge on one group, one sector of our society, Mr. Speaker, and that being the rural people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of people in this legislature that are MLAs for rural constituencies. And it seems funny, Mr. Speaker, that the only ones -- the only ones -- that are standing up to the constituents that they were elected to stand up for happen to sit over on this side of the House confined to these 10 desks, Mr. Speaker.

The only ones that are standing up for rural Saskatchewan and saying no, we don't agree with having our hospital taken away from us. No, we don't agree with having our highways ripped up. No, we don't agree with having our farm support taken away from us.

And where, Mr. Speaker, where have the NDP back-bench MLAs been while all this is going on? I haven't heard one of them, not a single one of them, including the member from Regina Rosemont, standing up and trying to defend rural Saskatchewan against this government. Not a single one of them, Mr. Speaker.

And it's all part of the trend, Mr. Speaker, that this government has shown itself for what it is. A party that is in decline -- rapid decline -- Mr. Speaker, and they know they are . . . the bottom has fallen out

electorally, the bottom has fallen out electorally, of your chances of being re-elected. And they know it.

And the Premier is doing whatever he can to cling to that . . . his desk, Mr. Speaker. Whatever he can to cling to his desk. So the way the great minds that sit in the front benches there have got together collectively and decided the only way we're going to save this thing, if there's any way of saving it at all, Mr. Speaker, is to strip rural Saskatchewan of their electoral votes and their ability to put members into this legislature, Mr. Speaker. That's what they've decided is the way to deal with the problem.

Just like everything else, if it doesn't work, if you can't get it to work, legislate it. Do whatever you have to to get your way, Mr. Speaker. Doesn't matter, win at all costs, Mr. Speaker. Doesn't matter what the consequences are, the goal is to win, Mr. Speaker. Get in there and fight as hard as you possibly can, go for the gusto and win. And that is exactly what they've decided, the front benches of the government, Mr. Speaker, have decided to do, try and protect themselves electorally and strip rural Saskatchewan of whatever remaining values are still out there, Mr. Speaker.

But I say to you, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of rural Saskatchewan will rise up against this government. I think that there's clear evidence to show, Mr. Speaker, that the people of rural Saskatchewan are pretty well fed up, pretty well fed up with what's happening with this government, Mr. Speaker.

And we know that the member from Cut Knife-Lloyd can't go home either on weekends any more. The people there are very, very disappointed in her, Mr. Speaker. The people are disappointed in her, as an elected MLA from that constituency, can't go home on the weekends because she gets into trouble at home on the weekends, Mr. Speaker. What happens is, Mr. Speaker, I can just imagine, the phone must never stop ringing of people calling and complaining against your government.

And so what happens? They hunker down, Mr. Speaker, right here in the heart of government, develop a bunker mentality, make it so that you collectively can govern right from Regina here and not have to go out into the great unwashed of rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Make it so that you don't have to put up with the criticism of rural Saskatchewan any more, Mr. Speaker. Make it so those people can't get to you any longer. Make it so those people can't get to you any more, Mr. Speaker. And make it so you can win again. Make it so that you can win again.

But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, even though the Minister of Justice said that the seat of Cut Knife-Lloyd probably wouldn't be affected, Mr. Speaker, how does he know that? How does he know that, Mr. Speaker? How does a member from Moose Jaw -- the one member from Moose Jaw -- know that his seat won't be affected, Mr. Speaker? And how does a couple of the ones up in P.A., how do they know that their seats won't be

affected, Mr. Speaker?

An Hon. Member: -- Show us the map.

Mr. Boyd: -- That's right, Mr. Speaker. I think it's been predetermined. That's how they know it's not going to happen. That's how they know that their seats aren't going to be affected by all of this, Mr. Speaker.

It must have been an interesting time in caucus when you divided up the spoils. It must have been an interesting day in caucus when you sat down with the big map on the wall and said: which one of you people are expendable? We know for sure the member from Shaunavon is expendable. He's toast; he's out of here, Mr. Speaker. He's expendable, so he has to go.

Now I'm not sure whether the member from Biggar has distinguished himself enough in this legislature, in caucus, whether he was able to save his hide that day, Mr. Speaker. I don't know. Maybe he can enlighten us. Maybe he would care to enlighten the people of Saskatchewan. Were you able to hold on to your seat for Biggar? Were you able to hold on to the seat for the constituents at Biggar? I don't know whether he was or not. I don't think he's a strong enough member, Mr. Speaker, to be able to do that.

An Hon. Member: -- Bengough-Milestone.

Mr. Boyd: -- Bengough-Milestone. There's another one too, Mr. Speaker. A novice member, not exactly myself, Mr. Speaker, first-time elected member; doesn't quite know the way around a little bit; hasn't been shown the ropes by some of the old boys on the front bench, Mr. Speaker. Hasn't been shown all of the intricacies of looking after things for themselves, Mr. Speaker. So probably that member's gone too. Bengough-Milestone will likely be gone. We're up to three now, Mr. Speaker.

Wonder which other ones are out of here too, Mr. Speaker. Redberry, I'll be bet you is . . . Redberry, I'll bet you is on the chopping block because the guy in the back corner over here that never says anything, we know very well he wouldn't stand up in caucus for his constituents, Mr. Speaker. He wouldn't stand up for his constituents, so he'll be gone too.

And the guy beside him -- what seat is he?

(2045)

An Hon. Member: -- Shellbrook.

Mr. Boyd: -- Shellbrook. He'll be gone too. Shellbrook will be gone and they'll roll that into P.A. for sure. A couple of P.A. seats are a little more safe. They're a little more safe up there. So those ones will have to be rolled into P.A. to make sure that there's two seats that are safe for NDP MLAs up there.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't take a lot of thought to be able to put together this kind of scenario that must have developed that day in caucus.

I wonder what made the member from Shaunavon and Biggar and Bengough-Milestone and a couple of these guys back . . . what made you guys into such black sheep in such a hurry with this government, Mr. Speaker? What did you do? What did you do that made them turn on you? What did you do that made them turn on you, Mr. Speaker? I wonder what happened that day in caucus. What made them turn on you so quickly? What made them turn on you so quickly?

And it's probably because, as some of the members were saying, it's because they don't do anything. That's what happened, Mr. Speaker. It's fairly clear; it's growing more clear all the time, Mr. Speaker. The people of those constituencies, those few that we mentioned, they are under-represented now and they're going to be with total unrepresentation pretty quick, after the big map gets completely drawn, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll bet there isn't a member on the front bench . . . oh no, I forgot about him -- Rosetown-Elrose. Rosetown-Elrose, he's in serious trouble, Mr. Speaker. The member from Maple Creek, as I said, will be representing everything from the South Saskatchewan to the American border and I'll have everything from the South Saskatchewan north to Cut Knife-Lloyd because that one's safe, apparently, Mr. Speaker. And then everything over to probably to about Diefenbaker Lake, which will take in the member from Rosetown-Elrose. I forgot about him. He's the guy that brought forward the fiasco of GRIP. And so if he isn't a black sheep in that caucus, I don't know who is. He's probably as much of a black sheep as the member from Regina Rosemont is these days, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and so that's probably the way it was sort of done. I'm not quite sure that that'd be exactly how it was done, but I guess that's probably how it was done. The two MLAs from Moose Jaw, they're reasonably strong members, so they were able to hold on. They were able to hold on. When he speaks in the legislature, that one over there -- I forget which seat he represents, north or south Wakamow, or whichever -- anyway, he has that ability to speak fairly well in caucus, I presume. He has that sort of religious zeal and that sort of auctioneer cadence that he's able to spellbound things for a little while.

And that's kind of a . . . even though he didn't make cabinet, that's kind of a useful kind of guy to have around, Mr. Speaker -- you know, one of those handy kind of things. That's what that member represents. So I think he'll be able to hold onto his seat. In fact, you already said he did. He will be able to hang onto it, Mr. Speaker. It's been widely reported, widely reported that he'll be able to cling to his seat -- cling to his seat. I don't know what . . . maybe he sent the front bench a Christmas card last year and the others didn't. I don't know what the criteria was that they used for drawing this thing up.

The guy up in Canora; I'd be a little worried about him

too though. That seat's . . . that one's a little tenuous, I would say as well, Mr. Speaker. Lately he hasn't been making a lot of people happy. Out at stock growers the other day out there, they wanted a barbecue, and I'm not sure it was beef that they wanted to barbecue that day, Mr. Speaker. I think it was the Minister of Agriculture that they had in mind, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we can put, we can put a light tone on all of this, and that's exactly what we've been doing, but it's far more serious than that, Mr. Speaker, far more serious than that. The people of rural Saskatchewan feel betrayed. They feel betrayed by a government that is drunk with power, Mr. Speaker. They feel betrayed by a government that knows no limit to the distance that they will go to try and get re-elected.

The Premier of this province, he worked, he worked as hard as any person in politics today to get where he is and he doesn't want it to slip. He doesn't want to have to go back to being the Leader of the Opposition, or just the back-bench MLA for Saskatoon Riversdale. It took a long time. He clawed his way to the top and he wants to stay there right on top, Mr. Speaker.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, if it means making a few members expendable, so be it. So be it, Mr. Speaker, if a few back-bench MLAs like Biggar and Canora and Bengough-Milestone and Rosetown-Elrose, if he has to make a few of them expendable, fine.

He'll find jobs for them nevertheless, though, Mr. Speaker. If he can find something that even looks remotely like these people might be qualified for, which would be quite a job in itself, Mr. Speaker, but if he can find something that these people would be qualified for, or at least look like they're qualified for, he'll be able to slip them into that.

The member from Biggar, I'm not sure what kind . . . he's an agricultural kind of guy, Mr. Speaker. There must be something in agriculture that he can do. Must be something, some board or some commission or . . . Does he know anything, Mr. Speaker? I don't know.

But he probably, because he's been in farm circles for a long time, probably has a reasonably good understanding of crop insurance. So, Mr. Speaker, that might be something that he could deal with.

Mr. Speaker, electoral reform is something that this government has put forward as one of its platforms, Mr. Speaker. Electoral reform is something that they promised, Mr. Speaker. Electoral reform is something that they said that they were going to do, Mr. Speaker, and now they want to put it in the hands of a commission, but they want to . . . they got to make sure that it's goes the way they want it to go.

So you got to dictate a few things, Mr. Speaker. You got to make sure that there's only two seats in the North because the two seats in the North, they know that there's pretty good chance that they can continue winning them, pretty good chance that they can continue winning them, Mr. Speaker. The people up in the North are far enough from Regina that they

don't know what's going on down here most of the time, so those seats are fairly well secured, so you can protect those. And then within caucus, the members that are the strongest within . . . performers within caucus, protect those, Mr. Speaker, and that's how it's done.

The Minister of Justice, Mr. Speaker, he said . . . he said, Mr. Speaker -- I thought it was absolutely amazing when he said it -- they didn't have any particular number in mind; it could have been 59, it could have been 57, could have been 55; picked out of the air 58. I can't . . . I don't know what it was about 58. Maybe it was his number in the pool, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it was the number he chose in the pool, the NDP pool that was going around, choosing up the number of seats that would be available for people.

So he picked 58. No rationale; admitted that. Admitted that there was no rationale to it. Said it just was a number. We just picked it out of the hat -- 58. So there we go. Cuts down eight seats. Save a little money, Mr. Speaker. Maybe make that money available to have a few more cabinet ministers, add a couple of resignations, a little bit messy, but we can bring in a few of the back-bench boys that have a little promise, Mr. Speaker. A couple of them that have a little promise.

And I'll predict, Mr. Speaker . . . I think the fellow from Kinistino has been doing pretty good, Mr. Speaker. I think he might be moving up in the ranks, Mr. Speaker. I think he's been doing not all that bad. And the fellow from Meadow . . . the guy from Meadow Lake hasn't been doing all that good. Yes, look over your shoulder; it wasn't you I was talking about. It certainly . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Entertaining as this assessment of our various merits is, I'm wondering if the member is going to relate it to the Bill. It doesn't seem to have much relevance to it.

Mr. Neudorf: -- I think, Mr. Speaker, in talking to the point of order raised by the government assistant Deputy House Leader is that it's very salient what my colleague from Kindersley is talking about.

He is tying everything together to . . . with the tremendous trend, the trend that we're experiencing here, the attack on the fundamental values of the people of Saskatchewan as the motion is indicating, Mr. Speaker. And he is taking it piece by piece, member by member, showing how they are not stacking up. It's very salient, very relevant, and very interesting and very truthful to the people of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: -- The member . . . the Government House member makes a good point. I have listened very carefully to the member from Rosthern and he is deviating very far and wide from . . . I think the member from Regina Churchill Downs, the Government House Leader, makes a very good point,

a valid point. And I have listened to the member from Kindersley and I think he's deviating too far from the motion and from the amendment. When he goes into detail on various members in this House and their qualifications, that really has nothing to do with this Bill and I ask him for the second or third time to stay with the Bill and with the amendment.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll try and keep it more closely confined to what you feel is the appropriate subject, Mr. Speaker.

The proposal that's been put forward by the opposition is quite clear, Mr. Speaker. There's 14 ridings, federal ridings, in Saskatchewan, 14 ridings in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Four provincial ridings per individual federal riding, we wind up with 56. At least it has some rationale to it, Mr. Speaker. It gives everyone the opportunity in Saskatchewan to know exactly who their representatives are.

We know of situations in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, where there are several provincial seats that are within a federal seat right now. We also know situations where there's just bits and corners of them overlapping jurisdictions -- all kinds of things like that, Mr. Speaker, and it must be confusing.

I represent a seat that is confined within a federal seat, Mr. Speaker, so there isn't as much of an opportunity for confusion on that issue, Mr. Speaker, but there other areas of the province where there is significant confusion between who is the MLA, who is the MP (Member of Parliament), all of those kinds of things, Mr. Speaker. We follow it fairly closely here, Mr. Speaker, so the people in this legislature generally know who their MP is, but there are folks that don't follow it quite as closely, Mr. Speaker, and there's a lot of confusion. And I think if everyone looks at it honestly, Mr. Speaker, I think that they would find that that's exactly the case.

You find quite often, Mr. Speaker, I have calls to my office and people will be confusing federal issues with provincial issues. They'll call you on unemployment insurance concerns, not realizing that you are the provincial MLA or not realizing that it's an area of federal responsibility, Mr. Speaker. They'll look at different areas. Often there's confusion in that one particularly, unemployment insurance, Mr. Speaker. There's lots of confusion in social services. There's lots of confusion in a number of different areas, government departments, Mr. Speaker. And I think that would help deal with that confusion, Mr. Speaker. I think it would help deal with it because the people . . . you'd be able to move them along the chain rather quickly to the person that they need to talk to, Mr. Speaker.

Often I think that there's occasions when people are confused because of the various boundaries and everything, Mr. Speaker. They don't know where exactly they fit into the puzzle that is out there, Mr. Speaker. So if we had boundaries that were the same federally within four constituencies, confined within that federal jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker, I think it would

alleviate a lot of that concern, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's a serious issue. It's an issue that goes to the heart of democracy. It goes to the heart of democracy because people want to have adequate representation. They want to have people in the legislature representing the interests of their constituency. And they want to know that the process of selecting the constituencies was done in a fair way, Mr. Speaker. And it can be argued -- and I'll accept that argument -- that it's been done in all different ways in the past, Mr. Speaker. And we can accept blame. We can accept blame for some of it in the past, and that other administrations have to accept blame for some of it in the past. But there's always the perception, Mr. Speaker, that it hasn't been done fairly, Mr. Speaker.

(2100)

But yet the one area it seems that there isn't near as much criticism is when you look at the federal areas, Mr. Speaker. There isn't near as much criticism because there's a lot more public input in it. People have a better understanding of it, Mr. Speaker. And as a result of that I think the people would support a move to confining four provincial seats into one federal seat, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, but what it does though, to the government members, it represents a significant problem for them. Because who on the front benches is going to be able to divide up the spoils of Regina or divide up the spoils of Saskatoon electorally, Mr. Speaker? Which ones would have to be bounced out, Mr. Speaker? And that's the problem that the government has with it.

Even though it's rational, even though it presents a lot of very, very good things to the people of Saskatchewan, even though it makes a lot of sense to most people, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't make sense because there might be the odd one on the government side that has to be moved aside, Mr. Speaker.

And generally the cabinet ministers, they know that the best thing they have to do for themselves and their constituents is protect their little interests, Mr. Speaker, so they can't possibly accept this. Even though I think, Mr. Speaker, there is wide-ranging support for this; even though when you look at it in an unbiased fashion, Mr. Speaker, there is support for it.

Mr. Speaker, there is lots more that can be said on this issue, Mr. Speaker. There's a . . . I think the people of rural Saskatchewan don't ask for a lot, quite frankly. I don't think they ask for a great deal. They don't ask for much, Mr. Speaker, but they do ask to be represented in this legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would now conclude my remarks by just saying that I think the government is wrong. I think the government is wrong to be bringing forward this type of legislation. I think that they should be looking seriously at other proposals. I think our proposal has

significant merit, Mr. Speaker. I think it is something the government should look at. But it represents a threat to them and therefore they won't do it, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have tonight, Mr. Speaker, the necessity to discuss in debate the Bill No. 79 which I guess is An Act to Provide for the Division of Saskatchewan into Constituencies for the Election of Members of the Legislative Assembly. That in itself seems like a reasonable thing to do from time to time. And having looked at history and lived in Saskatchewan for a fair number of years, we realize of course that this is a process that is ongoing and has been done many times before.

There is one slight difference though. This government has said that in the past in opposition, that they would never enter into things like gerrymandering, shaping of constituency seats for purely partisan political reasons. They would never do these kind of things, was the message that we heard for several years.

And yet here we are with a Bill that doesn't just review the boundaries, Mr. Speaker, it sets up a network and a process to deliberately manipulate the way that the seats in this province will be distributed, not for the purpose of fair representation, but for the purpose of achieving an NDP victory in the next provincial election. Of that I am absolutely convinced.

We are also, at the moment, dealing with an amendment to this Bill. And just to refresh my own mind and to make sure that my mind-set is on the perimeters that we are to stay within during this debate, as well as to let the people who may be watching on television know what we're discussing tonight and the points that we're trying to make and why, I will read the amendment basically to myself out loud. And it says:

That Bill 79 not now be read a second time because the principles contained in the Bill reinforce the recent trends of legislative action against the fundamental values of Saskatchewan people.

That's a fairly broad-ranging approach, Mr. Speaker, but it is necessary because a Bill of this nature that shapes the fundamental number of people that will make the laws of our province is, by its very nature, extremely important to all people within our province.

There's no question that this is something that affects everyone's lives, both the past of their lives and the future of their lives. The past of course being the direction that we establish in our minds, that we are taking in our lives in our province, and the future of course lying in the types of laws that we will have to live with and within the boundaries of.

If our laws are made by too many people, I suppose they become awkward and cumbersome. But perhaps we have too much expense and people would feel that there would be a waste.

On the other hand, if we have too few people, then we run the serious risk of destroying the fundamental basis of democracy itself, and that of course being the give and take of debate in the pros and the cons of the debate and the arguments that go on in a democratic Assembly. The debate is the fundamental part of democracy, Mr. Speaker. And if not enough people are involved in that debate, then the message may not fairly and equitably be exchanged.

The purpose of our structure in this Assembly is for the government to govern by introducing legislation and to try to formulate a direction of policy and laws that our people will live under and be administered by. The opposition's purpose of course is to bring out all of the problems that can result.

This may be done in something of an adversarial method and approach to the view of a quiet passer-by. But to those that study the institution, they must recognize that this is fundamental to the democratic process, in that bringing out all of the things that are wrong will equip the government to know where they may possibly be making mistakes.

And the hope of the democratic process, sir, is that those mistakes then can be corrected. And by the opposition showing the things that are wrong and the government trying to do things right, the two shall mix with amendments that come to legislation. And in all fairness, in the end hopefully society has rules and regulations that they can easily live under.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what has all this got to do with Bill 79 and the number of seats? Well quite frankly we deal here with who will be represented by what MLAs and how many people will be represented by each MLA and how will that MLA be able to serve the people that he is elected by.

It has been said by this government that the two seats in the northern Saskatchewan, even though they cover several hundreds of thousands of square miles, deserve to have two members to represent the vast needs of a vast area. In other words population is of no concern in those two instances because there are such diverse areas to cover. Because there are so many different things that go on within those vast miles, that no one can be truly sure how to properly represent the area if you don't have at least two members. And I can accept that. I don't for a minute suggest that those arguments are wrong.

But I will echo the sentiments of my colleague from Kindersley who said some minutes back, if the principle applies to northern Saskatchewan, why would it not also apply to vast distances or vast areas in some other part of Saskatchewan, for example, the south-east or the south-west corner or the south-central?

Our populations in rural Saskatchewan are dropping. There is no question about that. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to be able to figure that out. All you have to do is drive through our small rural towns.

But should those that are left in those vast areas with reduced numbers now have less representation than the people in the two northern seats? Do not the same principles and the same arguments apply, and shouldn't they apply? And my reasoning of course has to be well pointed out that I believe they should apply.

So population is not the only criteria that we can stick to. That is why I thought it was so fair and so reasonable when I first heard the proposition that the provincial constituencies should follow a model that is designed directly after the federal seats and the federal division. And the good luck of it is that, even though there's a 25 per cent variance allowed in the federal seat distribution, in Saskatchewan apparently we are told that that variance is not there. We do in fact have a variance that is much closer to the 5 per cent.

Having lucked into that, then it becomes very much possible, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for us, very much possible for us to have a system that integrates the two -- the federal and provincial boundary systems. That not only can save us a lot of hassle but it does give us a very fair distribution of representation and it provides us with an excellent opportunity to save the people of Saskatchewan several millions of dollars. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I think Saskatchewan people will all agree is very important in these days of depression and in our economy. To save millions of dollars by being able to copy the figures already paid for by the federal government seems a natural and intelligent thing to do from my point of view.

I've never, ever felt that it was wrong to borrow an idea or, to put it even more specifically, to even steal an idea if it was a good idea. Take the idea that somebody else has and use it to your benefit because nothing really, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in our world, is new or original. All thoughts have been thought before through generations of people; all ideas have been played around with before. We simply take the best of them, with the knowledge that we have gained as a society, and apply them where they best suit our needs and bring us the greatest economic benefit. And here is a golden opportunity for us to do exactly that.

We have 14 federal seats. Put four provincial seats into each federal seat and you've got 56 seats, two less than the magic number that the NDP have come up with. I don't know where they got that figure. I've never been able to figure how they thought that one through. My other colleagues suggest that it may have been that they saw that there were eight seats that they could probably never win, so they might as well eliminate them. That's altogether possible. But again, there is some built-in magic in these numbers. I don't know if it came about as a fluke or if it was well planned. Nevertheless, it's there.

The two northern seats in the federal distribution are

well taken care of because they allow for the preservation of that split of two members in the North. And yet at the same time, those areas in the rest of the province that are becoming more sparsely populated are also served by that same principle in those same numbers.

That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may be a coincidence or it may be a good plan, but it really doesn't matter. The fact that the numbers work out so well is the important thing. How it happened is not important at this stage. What is important is that they're there and they'll work, they are fair, they are reasonable; and we truly suggest to this government that they take a look at what they're doing with Bill 79 and put some amendments in that can make this truly a fair and equitable distribution without the partisan politics that we've seen in the past.

Now we have talked about the need, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of this government to align political boundaries in such a way that the history and the culture and the evolution of our province can continue to be represented and can continue to grow without being stifled. And we have said that there are certain trends in our amendment that are demonstrated as being Saskatchewan only -- trends of ways of life, all the way back to the pioneering spirit that only a mid-west part of Canada and perhaps some of the United States could express and show.

(2115)

The cowboy hat and the cowboy boots that some people wear, sir, are a distinct and cultural part of our heritage. You won't find them worn very often in Toronto. You won't find them very often in Montreal. And even Vancouver has very few; but a few are there because some of those from the Midwest go there and take their lifestyle and their culture with them.

I suggest that in some parts of the world the western dress that we sometimes wear would even be laughed at. But it's ours -- it's distinctly ours. In Saskatchewan, for those who choose to go that way and to wear those styles, no one much pays attention. They even have a bar in Regina where you get a special reduction when you come in the door if you're dressed in such attire. That has become our culture and our way.

Those things reflect in the kind of laws that we have and the trends that we are taking, and we call it our Saskatchewan values. The right to be a little different, the right to be a little bit eccentric. We don't wear six-guns on our hip but we live a rather free and easy and sort of easy, loose kind of lifestyle. Not loose in morality, but loose in our ability to accept one another.

We have a tendency not to discriminate in Saskatchewan against other folks, the way they do in some of the other parts of the world. We have the ability, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to look down the street and see people from all nationalities, and not even basically consider that they're there. That too is a part of our culture.

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- It's not that I'm not interested in the lifestyles of the people who the member relates to, I cannot however relate it to the Bill. It seems to me to be way off the topic.

The Deputy Speaker: -- I think we should give the member an opportunity to relate what he's saying to the Bill. Let him proceed.

Mr. Goohsen: -- Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For the member opposite, I want to read the amendment so that he will understand where we're coming from. The amendment says:

That Bill 79 not now be read a second time because the principles contained in the Bill reinforce the recent trend of legislative action against the fundamental values of Saskatchewan people.

The fundamental values of Saskatchewan people, sir, are the ability . . .

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order. I'm getting too much chatter from both sides and I'm finding it difficult to hear the member from Maple Creek.

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that it's hard for the members to understand that we have a separate culture that has been based on the kind of laws that we have evolved in this province and the trends that we have developed in our province; trends that can be very much affected by the boundaries we have in our Assembly, the boundaries that we have in our province that affect how many people will be in our Assembly.

The number of MLAs that will be here is determined on how many seats we have and where those boundaries are. Laws will be made by the balance that we have between urban, rural, and the mixes of the two.

The member from Greystone, earlier today, made some reflections that I thought were interesting. In her deliberation, she thought that a mix of urban and rural might be good in some cases. And I've thought about that and reflected. My first impression there was no, that wouldn't be fair because rural should be represented separately; urban should be separate because their ideas are somewhat different. However, there is some logic in having some mix as well, if somehow you can find representatives that also are able to have a mind-set that goes and flows between rural and urban.

I'm not sure how you guarantee that, though, or how you would find that proper kind of person that can balance the two within their own minds unless they lived rural and lived urban and sort of went back and forth. I have known people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who come from a farm background, who have now lived in

the cities for a full generation and their children do not have the same values about rural life that rural people have. You can see the difference in the thinking, even though they have that background.

Those that have a grandparent still out in the country -- in a small town or out on the land -- have a better understanding because they relate with those people in conversation and discussion, and they know about the trends of how our province evolved from a rural area into a rural-urban mix, which is leaning more and more to being an urbanized society as time goes by.

I don't know if we blame big machinery or what we blame those things on. Maybe it's not even all that bad. Maybe we shouldn't lay blame. Maybe we should say it's a good thing. Who knows? But the truth of the matter is that our cities grow bigger while our rural populations grow smaller.

The truth, though, is that the laws that we make have to serve both interests. Rural areas don't need or want the same things out of life that people in the cities need to have in their lives. There is a difference. There's nothing wrong with that difference. In fact, we should cultivate it and we should be proud of it because it is part of our culture to have both. We have the food producers and we have the city people who eat the food. We need one another. Neither one could exist without the other. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the laws that we make and the ways that we make them and the numbers of people that we put in this Assembly to make those laws is extremely important.

In this Assembly this year, 66 members have debated and worked on 90 Bills -- 90 new laws for the people of Saskatchewan to live under. It's true that in this Assembly at this time, the balance is heavily in favour of the government. That's the democratic process. If the people don't like that, they have themselves to blame and no one else. Because they had the right to go to the polls and choose who should represent them, and they should not fret when they find an imbalance.

I do find it surprising though when I travel around both urban and rural Saskatchewan that I find people saying, my, wouldn't it be better if there was a better balance. Well you can't blame the MLAs for that. We all ran fairly against one another. It was the people that chose.

The reality though is that even though the opposition is small and the government is large, the democratic balance is still here because we have in our democratic system this Assembly with rules. And the rules that are used allow the opposition the time necessary, for the most part, to give good, honest debate -- good, honest debate to each and every one of these 90 Bills.

And the opposition's job clearly is to bring out the errors, the possible errors, the mistakes and the possible mistakes, the good and the bad that the laws that we write can do to serve society.

That's extremely important. And most times the balance of the Assembly would be probably, by the luck of the draw, a little closer in balance, in numbers. But it's not so necessary to have those numbers in the legislature as it is to have them out in the province.

You say 66 people is a lot, and we have come to the conclusion that with our declining population that that is a fact. We agree that we have to reduce our numbers here because the numbers of people that we represent seem to be falling.

I don't know if we can ever turn that around, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have hopes that we will. I have hopes that we will find a way to build our job base and to build the numbers in our province a little bigger. Not that I want to be elbow to elbow with people all around me all the time. I don't want to be in big line-ups and I don't want to push and shove everywhere I go, but Saskatchewan could use a little bigger population to make our economy work better.

But the reality is that we have so many square miles in this province and unless Alberta follows through with its intention/suggestion a month or so back when they said that they were thinking of annexing part of Saskatchewan, unless they do that, our area will stay the same.

There are of course people on the west side of the province that would be quite happy to see the Alberta border slide a hundred miles over.

An Hon. Member: -- 150.

Mr. Goohsen: -- One of the members who lives 140 miles says 150 would be a lot better. I suspect that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I'm going to have to take a breath while the members interject their ideas on how we'll put up these new boundaries.

That's just a little fun that we need to do once in a while to lighten up our debate, Deputy Speaker, but the reality being that we have to have a consideration for the number of square miles we have in our province. And we have to think in terms of how we can get around to meet our constituency, to talk to the people that we represent, to get their ideas.

If I've heard one accusation of wrongdoing or fault in my travels as an MLA, it has been that people feel that they don't have a direct input to this Assembly and to the laws and through their MLAs to getting things done that they want done. They feel isolated once we're elected. They talk about the need for recall because they quite simply don't think that when their MLA gets to Regina that that MLA is any longer listening to them.

If you have to travel around a constituency like mine, it becomes very difficult to stay here for four months and then be able to get back and talk to all of those folks. I'd be lucky if I see them all in a parade let alone one on one each year. The pure fact of the matter is that if you've got to travel around the Great Sand Hills, the great Cypress Hills, even if you've got the greatest people in the province like I have, it is physically

impossible to get that done.

If you make my constituency bigger by geography even though there aren't any more people, I am going to have just that much harder time getting around to meet those folks. And if I don't get there to meet with them and talk to them, then their complaint is legitimate that they are not being heard by their representative. Because quite frankly, if I'm not there to listen to them, how can I know what they feel and what they want.

And it's true that the people in my area don't change very much, their ideas don't change a lot. That's why they've been electing Conservative representatives for many, many years. But they do get different ideas about what laws we should have when those laws are constructed by an NDP government. That shakes them right up actually and they do want to have some input.

So quite seriously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could talk about this Bill and the troubles it will cost probably for two or three days. We've got all of the seats in the Assembly with all of the names on. And while the member from Kindersley went through them at some length of who would be here and who not, I'm not going to do that but I could speculate on who will be here and who not and why, why they won't be here again after these boundaries are redrawn. Because the boundaries are going to be drawn to eliminate those people who can't come back and win and sit on the government side.

There's a fear in the government that they can't form government next time. And so they have to redraw the boundaries to try to bring the centres that have the biggest vote for them into balance with those centres where they haven't got such good support to outweigh the balance of numbers.

I could talk, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a long time about each of the 90 Bills and the direction that those Bills are taking us in this province, the direction that we are going away from the cultural trend that we have established in our province in the past. The direction that we are taking has taken a sharp veer off of the road that we were travelling on, metaphorically speaking. That sharp directional change is in the direction of power to the government and government officials, a power structure we have never seen before.

And with 90 Bills you can appreciate that one could talk for a long time. We could talk about Bill 38, the shift in the direction of our morality through our law making, a direct and very absolute shift in direction, an almost 90-degree direction, metaphorically speaking, in change.

I picked up the one that says lighten up, and I guess maybe that's good advice. I'll take it for myself. And I won't go into that particular news article, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I could talk about the newspaper that is distributed by the taxpayers' association that tells us about how we

are running amok with taxation and how we are destroying the very essence of the economy of our province.

(2130)

And I could talk about the promises made by the former member of the opposition, the now Premier, who talked about a direction in our province. And he said in a campaign: and the latest PC proposal to close down all five hospitals in this constituency is unacceptable. And now he and his government closed down 52. And while it was unacceptable before, now closing 52 is acceptable. That, sir, is a right-angle change in the direction on the road we were travelling and the values that we held in this province.

I could talk about the labour Bills and how they are changing the direction that our province has travelled and the fundamental differences that we are encountering with this administration. And we could make a very strong case for honesty and for goodwill and for the morality that needs to come through the legislation that we bring forth, the kinds of things that can only happen if people are truly and honestly represented. And this is key to the number of people that are represented in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we must maintain the ability for representatives in this Assembly to be able to get in touch with the people that put them here. If we don't maintain that, then we have no right to be here. And on the day when I can't represent my constituents and the feelings and thoughts that they have, then I probably shouldn't be here, and maybe that's when my seat should be eliminated. But it can't be better if we make the seats so big that I can't travel around it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about this for many, many hours because it is a very important issue, but my colleagues have got some things they've got to get off their chest. And if I don't let them get their two bits worth in, they might throw me out of the airplane tomorrow. So with that I want to say good night to my wife, and thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do indeed have some words we would like to say on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, because it's very important to the people of rural Saskatchewan the type of representation that will be available to them once this Bill passes. And not only is it a matter of the number of representatives that Saskatchewan has, that rural Saskatchewan has, but the quality and the availability of access to those MLAs.

I was talking one day to the member from Regina Lakeview and we were comparing constituencies. We were comparing what we have within our various constituencies. So I'd like to give you a little description of my constituency, Mr. Speaker -- Souris-Cannington. We have 20 communities within that constituency, Mr. Speaker. We have 20 urban

municipalities. We have 11 rural municipalities, Mr. Speaker.

And rural and urban municipalities, while in a lot of cases they face the same problems, they also face some very distinct problems. I have one Indian reserve, two school boards, Mr. Speaker, and six health boards. Also within the larger area of my community, which would encompass all of the federal seat, we have one provincial riding within the federal seat that I believe is divided up into either five or six sections being represented by either five or six different federal ridings, in one provincial constituency. And that's, Mr. Speaker, really not a very good situation. It would be much better for those people if they had to deal with one federal member and one provincial member within that small grouping.

Within the member from Regina Lakeview's constituency, and it goes for any of the major urban seats either in Regina or Saskatoon, but in this particular seat this MLA has to deal with one urban municipality. She has to deal with no rural municipalities whatsoever. So her municipal concerns are being dealt with with one agency. I don't believe there are any Indian reserves within this particular seat. And fact is, I don't believe there are any Indian reserves within the city of Regina.

She has to deal with two school boards, the same number that I do. She has one health care district. But while this member has one health care district and two school boards to deal with and one urban municipality to deal with, she also has 10 other MLA colleagues within the boundaries of the city of Regina that deal with those same people also. So there's not a lot of pressure on one individual urban MLA from Regina or Saskatoon when it comes to representing their community because they have 11 MLAs in each one of those cities.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are more MLAs in either Regina or Saskatoon than there are city councillors in those cities. And that seems a little ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, because those city councillors are dealing with the entire section of the city and the MLA deals with a very much smaller portion of that city.

Mr. Speaker, while we were considering this Bill this afternoon, I sat down and did a rough calculation as to the geographic circumstances within my constituency. My constituency covers almost 2,700 square miles, which is over 1.7 million acres. When you look at the city of Regina, you look within the city of Regina at Wascana Park. Wascana Park is approximately 1,200 acres.

The southern border of my constituency is approximately 54 . . . is approximately 63 miles long -- east and west -- and 54 miles north and south. On the angle, Mr. Speaker, it's 83 miles.

But we can't travel on the angle, Mr. Speaker, because no roads travel in that particular direction -- on a south-east/north-west or even on a

north-east/south-west line; they all run east and west or north and south.

So to travel across my constituency from one corner to the other, Mr. Speaker, in a south-east/north-westerly direction, you have to travel about 117 miles. So if you drove at a reasonable speed, you could cover that distance in about two and a half hours.

Again in my discussion with the member from Regina Lakeview, she said she could walk across her constituency in less than two hours.

An Hon. Member: -- Lake Centre.

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. The member has corrected me. It's Lake Centre rather than Lakeview. I apologize for not knowing her constituency. She can walk across that constituency in less than two hours, Mr. Speaker, and I can't even drive across mine in two hours.

There is a vast difference, Mr. Speaker, between rural constituencies and urban constituencies. And while the members of the government may wish to ignore this fact because they think it's to their political benefit to eliminate the rural ridings, when you look at northern Saskatchewan we also have a problem of communication and travel. But when you go into northern Saskatchewan, most of the people in those two constituencies reside in a few communities.

And while it's expensive to travel -- and it takes time to fly across those constituencies -- from community to community, it really is on a par to a lot of the rural communities . . . constituencies, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to difficulty and the time factors involved in travelling across those constituencies. And yet the government opposite is saying yes, it's fair, it's right that those constituencies not be bound by their concept of fairness, which is one person, one vote, with a 5 per cent variance.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if it's good to give geographic considerations, time and distance in northern Saskatchewan, I believe those considerations should also be given to some areas in rural Saskatchewan, if not all areas. In northern Saskatchewan, people working for the federal government get isolation pay. Well, Mr. Speaker, in southern Saskatchewan there are communities where federal bureaucrats are given isolation pay because of the difficulties and the isolation of those communities.

The RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) officer stationed at Val Marie receives isolation pay because that community is so far-flung, because of the difficulty in communicating, because of the problems that can occur with adverse weather. But those reasons are not being given consideration by the government members opposite because they see it as their political advantage not to give those kinds of considerations.

The member from Greystone spoke of combined seats, of rural-urban

split . . . not a split but rural-urban combinations. Well, Mr. Speaker, that does happen in some places. If we look at the seat of Melfort; Melfort is a small city, approximately 5,000 people, and around it is a rural area that is also represented. But in that rural area there is approximately 50/50 per cent rural and urban. But what we see happening, Mr. Speaker, in some of the major cities or in the area surrounding it, is that the government will take approximately a two-thirds urban and a one-third rural. And what happens under those circumstances, Mr. Speaker?

What happens is . . . all you have to do is look at the Prince Albert federal riding. The city of Prince Albert and the rest of Saskatchewan north are represented in one federal riding. What it means is that the city of Prince Albert makes the decisions, politically, for the northern half of the province because most of the people live there. And if you base it simply on a one person, one vote, that's fair. But most of the people who do not live in Prince Albert also need to have a fair representation, Mr. Speaker. They need a quality of representation that understands their particular circumstances and their needs. And that's what rural Saskatchewan needs, and that's what urban Saskatchewan needs.

My colleague from Maple Creek described people who have moved from the farm and now live in urban circumstances and no longer relating back easily to the needs of the farm, the needs of rural Saskatchewan. I'd like to give you an example.

I came out of the post office one day on a Saturday afternoon and it was raining. And I met one of the neighbours who lived in town. And the lady says to me, well I suppose you're happy now that it's raining on the weekend. Well, Mr. Speaker, we hadn't had rain for a month, and in a farm community in the middle of July, that's a very critical situation. But because this person was not directly related to the farm and the farm economy, she didn't understand the need that rural Saskatchewan has for rain. And the same circumstances happen when it comes to representation on a multitude of issues in Saskatchewan. Someone with an urban perspective has difficulty understanding the rural needs and vice versa, Mr. Speaker. Somebody from rural Saskatchewan can have a great deal of difficulty understanding the needs of the downtown core of Regina or the suburbs because we haven't lived those experiences.

And this is the reason why we feel our proposal to combine the provincial seats within the federal ridings is indeed a good proposal but we're prepared to listen to other valid arguments. The arguments that the government has presented in this Bill are not based on any rationale other than the fact of decreasing the number of ridings from 66 to 58.

And as the minister himself said, he plucked 58 from out of the air. Well I would suggest perhaps he put a little more thought into it and plucked that number 58 out of the air because he looked around the province and said, how can we redistribute the provincial

ridings in this province to give us, the NDP government, a maximum advantage. By going to a one person, one vote, 5 per cent variance, by going to that number, it gives a greater preponderance to urban Saskatchewan over rural Saskatchewan.

If you look at the election results from 1982 and 1986, Mr. Speaker, you see that in 1982 and 1986 both, rural Saskatchewan in the main voted against the NDP. In 1982 a good number of the urban seats also voted against the NDP, but they shifted back in 1986. But because of the weight of the rural vote the NDP lost that election also and the government, Mr. Speaker, has decided that that will not happen to them again. They will eliminate the possibilities that rural Saskatchewan will be the determining factor on who wins or loses the election.

(2145)

I was looking over the election results for Saskatchewan from 1905 to 1986, and it's really quite interesting, Mr. Speaker, when you look through here. In 1905 there were 24 seats in Saskatchewan. My own seat was divided between two constituencies, Cannington and Souris. And in 1905, in the Cannington constituency, it was won by an Ewan McDiarmid of the Provincial Rights Party. No, excuse me, it was won by John D. Stewart of the Liberal Party. I'm sure Mr. Stewart would be unhappy to know that I had forgot that he had won that. And in Souris, Mr. Speaker, the election was won by a James T. Brown of the Provincial Rights Party. That was the initial formation of this province, Mr. Speaker, and we had 24 seats.

As we go through, Mr. Speaker, the various years . . . 1908, three years later, we had gone from 24 seats, Mr. Speaker, to 40 seats; 1912, we were at 53 seats, an increase of 13 seats in four years. At that particular time I'm not sure how my constituency was divided because we have the constituency of Cannington, the constituency of Moose Mountain, and the constituency of Souris, which can all have been part of my present constituency. 1917, 56 seats; 1921, 63 seats, Mr. Speaker -- a very significant increase; 1925, 63; 1929, 63; 1934 was a change, Mr. Speaker. We dropped from 63 to 55. But the thing that's interesting in 1934, and even in 1929, is that the cities now, rather than having one member in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, perhaps Prince Albert, there are now two members in each of those cities.

And this stayed that way, Mr. Speaker, for a significant amount of time. 1938, we're at 51; 1944, 51; 1948, 52, Mr. Speaker.

And where does that change come in? That change was an added rural seat, Mr. Speaker. 1953, we added another seat which was an increase in Regina to three members, Mr. Speaker. In 1952, there were 53 members in this legislature and three of those members were from the city of Regina.

1956, we also had 53; 1960, 55; and again that change, Mr. Speaker, came in the cities. We now have

four members in Regina and three in Saskatoon.

1964, we increased to 59 members, Mr. Speaker, which was an increase of one in Regina and five members in total in Saskatoon; 1967, we had 59; 1971, 60 members, Mr. Speaker; 1975, we had 61 members. And, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting for me personally, 1975, because that was the first year the constituency was called Souris-Cannington, which is what I currently represent, and it was won by my predecessor for the Progressive Conservatives, Mr. Eric Berntson; 1978, we had 61 members; 1982, Mr. Speaker, we had 64, which was an increase of 3. In 1986, we had 64 members, and in 1991, Mr. Speaker, we had 66.

Because our population had gone up in the preceding 10 years, we . . . the numbers increased because of the census, Mr. Speaker. While our numbers have dropped somewhat, the change hasn't been that dramatic. But the decrease down to 56 members, as we suggest -- or is 58, Mr. Speaker? -- can be done fairly. It can be done fairly to give representation to all the people of this province in an equitable manner.

But fair and equitable, Mr. Speaker, does not mean just one person, one vote because there are always other considerations -- geographic considerations, trade patterns, communities of interest. So, Mr. Speaker, those items need to be taken into consideration also when the government is making its decision.

Mr. Speaker, when this Boundary Commission goes out to tour the province, I'm sure that they will hear representations from a good number of people representing various communities of interest. I hope that they listen to those interests sincerely.

We will be proposing some amendments that we feel will aid the Boundary Commission in listening to those communities of interest, that will make the Bill better, and make the representation in this province better.

I have other colleagues, Mr. Speaker, who also wish to address this issue and I would allow them that opportunity at this time. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a few words to say on this Bill, Mr. Speaker. I, along with my constituents in the constituency of Wilkie, are very concerned about how this Bill is being proposed. Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Wilkie has only had one NDP or CCF representative out of that constituency since the province was formed.

The people out there, Mr. Speaker, feel that their constituency could be eradicated for purely political reasons. So they are quite concerned, Mr. Speaker, and I believe it is only right that I should bring their concerns to the attention of the government.

Mr. Speaker, this government I believe is on a very

slippery slope. When they started, they started off, Mr. Speaker, with the GRIP Bill. They started off, Mr. Speaker, doing things that were not fair, I consider not right, and, Mr. Speaker, I consider very dangerous.

Once that first step is taken, Mr. Speaker, it's very easy to start down the slippery slope. Mr. Speaker, the trend that we see here in this legislature, I can point out to you, Bill 38. Bill 38, Mr. Speaker, is another step down that slope; Bill 55, another step down that slope; Bill 56 and indeed Bill 90. Mr. Speaker, Bill 79 is also another major step down that slippery slope. Mr. Speaker, we feel that under the present Bill, you tie the hands of the commission.

Mr. Speaker, it's awfully hard for us on this side of the House to understand why the government, the NDP over there, will not put their trust in the commission. They will not trust a commission to be fair. I don't know whether it's because they don't want them to be fair. I don't know whether it's because they themselves have no fairness within themselves, or what it is. But, Mr. Speaker, why do we have tie the hands of a commission?

Why do we have to say that the variation is 5 per cent? Why can't we say to that commission, you have the parameters of 5 per cent to 25 per cent, and let the commission make up their mind what is fair?

As my colleague just pointed out, over the years, many times the number of seats have been changed. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the population during those times, you'll find that the population varied also. Those of you that don't know that, we were, at one time, over a million people back in the early days, and for that reason the number of seats went up.

The proposal that the leader of our party put forward, I think is fair. I think it makes common sense. There could be some adjustments to be made. We're prepared to work with the government to make those adjustments. Mr. Speaker, I would ask why, why in this case the government seems to feel that we have to do it their way and we have to do it now? My colleague mentioned the good, the bad, and the ugly. Mr. Speaker, I believe this is the ugly.

I would like to quote from a newspaper clipping, Mr. Speaker, that goes back into 1988 when we were government. We were making some changes. And the headline, Mr. Speaker, simply says: Riding changes need more time for study. And that was by the NDP of the day, Mr. Speaker. Now that was after five years, and at that time the opposition of the day was saying, what's the hurry, why can't we have a little more time.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read another headline just to point out the fact of where we see this government going: NDP criticizes proposed electoral boundaries. The proposals now on a new electoral map should be divided into 66 seats violates the principle of representation by population. And that was by the member from Riversdale who is now our Premier, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at no time has there ever been such a rush by a government to get some of their tough legislation through. Mr. Speaker, the people in Wilkie constituency are very, very nervous. They're concerned, Mr. Speaker, that we will be one of the rural constituencies that will not be there after the redistribution. And I remind you of what the member from Maple Creek said. In my constituency, Mr. Speaker, it's approximately 75 miles by 55 miles, just quickly. And when I try to meet those people, Mr. Speaker, I can't make a swing through that area just stopping off at the various little towns without taking a whole day -- a whole day. And all I do is stop for a little while in each of the towns.

And at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we must have -- and I agree with the government -- we must have a value, a weighted value in each person's vote. We accept that. We also accept -- while we don't agree that it should take place after only two years or three years, Mr. Speaker -- that we could possibly do with less representation. But what we find out, Mr. Speaker, is that there seems to be a rush to do these things.

I take you to the health care. We've pleaded with the government, wait a little bit. We've proposed that we hold some Bills for six months. We're not proposing that they don't do it. We're saying, let's do it right.

I understand from some of the remarks made from some of the people opposite, Mr. Speaker, that the proposal to reduce the representation down to 56 members was not unacceptable to the government. They said they needed time; there was some problems with it. Fine.

The Speaker: -- Order. It now being 10 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10.

The Assembly adjourned at 10 p.m.