

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure this morning to present petitions once again on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens, and I'll just read the prayer into the record, Mr. Speaker.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put aside any consideration of forcing small-business owners to pay 100 per cent of the costs involved with digging up underground storage tanks and replacing them, and instead offer alternatives through abandoning regulations calling for digging up underground tanks, with the exception of those tanks which have been proven to be leaking, cost sharing or another alternative agreed upon by all parties affected.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I have people from communities of Lemberg, Saskatchewan; Duff; Lemberg; Abernethy; Neudorf; Marsden; obviously communities all over the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I do present these petitions today.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions dealing with the high cost of removing and digging up storage tanks in the province and I won't read the prayer, but I will just indicate that there are people here from Gerald, Saskatchewan; Carrot River; Arborfield; Tisdale, Aylsham, Waldheim, Carrot River, Success, and areas throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. And I want to lay these on the Table on behalf of these people.

Mr. Neudorf: — I have a number of petitioners here, also dealing with the Workers' Compensation, Occupational Health and Safety Act. And the prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put aside any consideration of forcing small-business owners to pay 100 per cent of the costs involved with digging up underground storage tanks and replacing them, and instead offer alternatives through abandoning regulations calling for digging up underground tanks, with the exception of those tanks which have been proven to be leaking, cost sharing or another alternative agreed upon by all parties affected.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these come largely from areas in the province in my area of Laird, many from Waldheim, Rosthern, and Martensville, along with some from Grandora, Liberty, and pages from the area of Yorkton, and Viscount as well, Mr. Speaker. And it is my pleasure to table them this morning.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions to present this morning:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put aside any consideration of forcing small-business owners to pay 100 per cent of the costs involved with digging up underground storage tanks and replacing them, and instead offer alternatives through abandoning regulations calling for digging up underground tanks, with the exception of those tanks which have been proven to be leaking, cost sharing or another alternative agreed upon by all parties affected.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions come from Gainsborough, Carievale, Storthoaks, Estevan, Marshall, Luseland, Meadow Lake, Dorintosh, Pierceland, Glaslyn, Beauval, Wilkie, Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, I present them now.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have several petitions I'd like to lay on the Table on behalf of the people. And as the prayer has been read, I will not read the prayer, Mr. Speaker.

These petitions come from various municipalities and towns across the province — Luseland, Major, we go to Unity, Saltcoats, Bredenbury, Martensville, Maple Creek, Stornoway, Langenburg, Rokeby. Mr. Speaker, they seem to cover the whole province. And it's my pleasure to lay these on the Table on behalf of those people, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a number of petitions I would like to present to the floor of this Assembly. And the petitions read along the lines of the other petitions that have already been presented regarding the underground tanks and the problems associated with them, and they call for the government to reconsider.

And they're signed by individuals from the communities of Wapella, Tantallon, and Whitewood in my constituency — and a number of people have taken the time to sign them in these communities — the community of Weyburn, the communities of Weyburn and Estevan, Canora, Yorkton, Kamsack, Pelly, Sturgis, Buchanan. I so present them to the House.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well have petitions with regard to underground storage tanks and the cost of digging them up and the useless . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I think the member knows that he cannot make those comments on presenting petitions.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it deals with the underground storage tanks issue that I'm sure all the members are familiar with.

And they are from . . . they are presented on behalf of people from the Spalding-Weyburn area of Saskatchewan. I'm pleased to be able to present them on their behalf today, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 11(7) they are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of Saskatchewan praying that the Assembly urge the government to change the regulations requiring the replacement of underground storage tanks.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a distinct pleasure for me to get on my feet again and introduce to you, and through you to all members of the Assembly, 40 cadets. They're sitting in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker.

And a lot of these are . . . they are out of North Battleford, I understand, but a lot of them are from my constituency. They range in age from 12 to 15 years. Mr. Speaker, I'll be meeting later with this group and we'll have a visit and probably have some pictures taken.

They are accompanied by their teacher, Joan Frey, and chaperons, Michael Curtis and Wayne Stephens. And we'll be having a visit in room 255 later on.

Now I would ask members present to give a rousing welcome to these people who have come quite a distance to visit with us today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you, to my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly, 14 grade 12 students from Bert Fox Composite School in Fort Qu'Appelle. They are accompanied by their teacher, Richard Rathgaber.

And Fort Qu'Appelle is always a very special place to visit; I love to go there. So I'm delighted to welcome them here today. And I would ask all my colleagues to join me in giving them a warm welcome to this Assembly and to Regina. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you

and through you, to the House I would like to introduce two guests up in your gallery — Ruth Linka and Cheryl Grzeda who are here today to observe one of our pages in operation. And I would like to ask the House to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce two guests from my constituency. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, we have the Mayor of Creighton, Mr. Richard Carnegie. Mr. Carnegie has been involved in many activities in relation to northern development and continues to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to introduce my office manager, the person that has kept me out of trouble, that has solved many specific issues from the people in northern Saskatchewan. My office manager, Cec Allen.

And I would like all members to welcome them to the House, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Esterhazy Health and Wellness Expo

Mr. Knezacek: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today and tomorrow the great Esterhazy health, wellness, and fitness expo will be held, an event sponsored jointly by IMC (International Minerals and Chemicals Corporation) Canada, the North Valley Health District, the local medical community, the town of Esterhazy, and the Potashville School Division. The honorary chairperson for the event is our Minister of Health who will be participating in this function later today.

This is an exciting and innovative way to promote wellness, Mr. Speaker. There will be hands-on exhibits encouraging public participation. There will be a fat-free cooking demonstration, fitness demonstrations, aerobics for people other than myself, and many other demonstrations — 35 exhibits, plus seminars and speakers like Dave Ridgway and Gainer the Gopher.

There is also the great elevator weigh-in in which 10 members went to the local elevator to be weighed in, then returned four weeks later to be weighed again. The team losing the most weight will win a cash prize. More importantly, one-half of the team entry of \$50 goes to the Heart and Stroke Foundation. There were 47 such teams — almost 500 people — participating in that event itself.

The expo is an outstanding example of the community working together in harmony to promote health, wellness, and fitness. Our health is our responsibility; our wellness is the result of our actions. This educational and fun-filled two days will make us more aware of those facts.

Congratulations to . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Teachers Honoured by Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation

Mr. Kowalsky: — Today I would like to recognize two outstanding educators who were recently honoured by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. Verda Petry of Regina and Gordon Merryfield of Watrous were both named honorary life members of the federation.

Verda Petry, who was originally from Melfort, enjoyed a teaching career that spanned over 42 years.

Her strong involvement in the community gained Verda Petry much respect. She has served with the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) on various committees, including president of the Regina Public School Teachers' Association and various other academic committees and services. Verda Petry has also received many awards for her service, including the mathematics teachers' Master Teacher award, the Governor General of Canada 125 award for community services, and the Regina Public School Teachers' Association award for outstanding contributions. Verda Petry is currently vice-chairperson of the Regina Public School Board.

Gordon Merryfield was honoured for the time, commitment, talents, and leadership that he has provided to the teaching profession. Gordon Merryfield's involvements with the STF started at the local level, as a councillor and vice-councillor. Provincially, he was an executive member, vice-president and president. Nationally, he represented the federation of the . . . the Canadian Teachers' Federation board of directors. And internationally, he was a delegate to two assemblies of the world conference of organization of the teaching profession and a member of the CUSO team teaching in Nigeria.

Mr. Speaker, both teachers deserve congratulations from this Assembly for their great accomplishments and for being recognized by their peers.

Southwest Regional Economic Development Authority

Hon. Mr. Penner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night in Gull Lake the Minister for Economic Development and Mr. Corney Martens jointly announced Saskatchewan's third regional economic development authority. The Southwest REDA (regional economic development authority) has nine founding members, with eight more expected to join soon. Communities like Gull Lake, Eastend, Maple Creek, Herbert, the R.M. (rural municipality) of Carmichael, and the city of Swift Current are members of the REDA. We expect other RMs, communities and

the Nekaneet First Nation to join soon.

Mr. Speaker, the REDA covers the largest geographic area of any REDA to date. We do things big in the south-west part of the province, and our region is a diverse one, offering many strengths in tourism, agriculture and industry. Because of our huge distances and sparse population, cooperation and working together is necessary to prosper. We have this history of cooperation. This announcement is further evidence of that tradition.

As Mr. Martens said last night, there is already a history of regional teamwork and a commitment to economic development in this region. This new organization will help focus our efforts and strengthen our ability to work together to build our own future.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the minister and especially the members of the Southwest REDA. This is a fine example of partnership in action.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Milestone Recreation Complex Earns Award

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you Mr. Speaker. Each year the Saskatchewan Recreation Facility Association presents to a community the Cecil Nobes Facility Award of Excellence, an award for construction of a new facility where the unique or outstanding design contributes to the overall efficiency of the facility's operation.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce that last evening at the association's 12th annual awards program, the Milestone and district recreation complex was the proud winner. The Milestone and district recreation complex consists of four main areas — the arena with an ice surface measuring 87 feet by 190 feet, four sheets of curling ice and two large waiting-rooms. The arena seats 800 people and an additional 300 people can be accommodated in the waiting-room.

The building was started in November 1987 and as funds were obtained, construction progressed. The building was officially opened to the public in April, 1992 when the Milestone Rodeo Association hosted its first indoor rodeo in the complex.

The building lends itself to a multitude of uses from the traditional ice sports of hockey, figure skating and curling to many other functions, such as fowl suppers, rodeos, dances, craft/trade shows, high school grads. There's a walking club, meetings, seminars, bridge tournaments and carnivals. The only limiting factor in the use of the building is the imagination of the people in the community.

The building committee and the people of Milestone and district are to be congratulated on winning the award and for seeing this major sports and recreation project through to completion. A tremendous amount of fund-raising and work went into it. Congratulations on a job well done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tribute to SaskTel Operators

Mr. Draper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, sir. Last night I had a very pleasant experience. I telephoned my wife from Lumsden, and we have a rotary dial on the phone at the farm so I couldn't punch in my calling card number and I must have misdialled. A voice came on the line and said: you have reached an operator; how can I help you?

I was surprised and delighted to speak to a live human being and I told her so, and she giggled and thanked me. Now, Mr. Speaker, sir, have you ever had an answering machine that giggled? I'm sure you haven't and neither have I. And I was suddenly struck by the thought that what serves people best is other people.

It pointed out to me, Mr. Speaker, that the strength of any country or any province or state, for that matter, lies in its people, and the joys of life consists in communicating with those people, sir, not machines. And let us try and keep it that way.

And please allow me the opportunity to thank those wonderful and helpful operators at SaskTel for all their hard work and kindnesses over the past — people that we never meet, we never see, we only hear. Thank you, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Labour Standards Amendments

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Maple Creek asked the Minister of Labour about your amendments to The Labour Relations Act. We've been informed by a human resource specialist that the definition of spouse as contained in the Act opens the door for spousal benefits to be extended to same-sex couples.

Mr. Minister, an inquiry to the Department of Labour confirmed that suspicion, specifically the extension of bereavement, injury, and illness leave. I understand that from media reports you have garnered a legal opinion from your department that differs from that of the Labour department and I'd ask if you would report to us your findings, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm glad to do that, Mr. Speaker. I've had an opportunity to look at this overnight. I must say I couldn't make out what the member's question was in question period yesterday but he clarified it, he clarified it later . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I resent that, Mr. Speaker. I don't have to put up with that kind of nonsense across the floor.

This was drafted by the Department of Justice and it was drafted in a way that the member need not be concerned. The words used in the section 29.3 (1), will not extend any benefits at all to same-sex couples

and that is the opinion of the Department of Justice and we're content with that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again to the minister: Mr. Minister, as I indicated yesterday, you had given a strong defence of what the Human Rights Code meant and as we look over The Labour Standards Act we could find, Mr. Minister, that the way the wording is here it would appear to leave it wide open for any same-sex couple to come and suggest that they have that legal right. And my major concern, Mr. Minister, is that it leaves it open.

Now I think the easiest way to settle that issue, Mr. Minister, and the way to end the concern and the confusion would be to change the definition of a spouse to correspond with the federal tax definition, and that means including the phrase "of the opposite sex."

I believe, Mr. Minister, this is a simple House amendment and we will all agree to it. Will you commit to changing The Labour Relations Act to preclude expensive benefits to same-sex couples?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well in drafting statutes in Saskatchewan we strive for a certain amount of consistency. This is a definition that we've used in other Acts. We think there is no question about the fact as to what is a spouse in the province of Saskatchewan.

It has never, it has never been held, it has never been held and never been found and never been a matter of practice that same-sex couples are regarded as spouses. I mean who among us has ever considered that same-sex couples would be spouses? They are clearly not, in the province of Saskatchewan.

So we're trying for some consistency across the piece here. This is the definition that has been in use in the past, and it's one whose meaning is perfectly clear. And may I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the member really has to distort the plain language of the amendment in order to come up with the idea that in some way it would extend benefits to same-sex couples. It simply does not.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Contract

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Minister, in March of last year SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation) launched an investigative audit into the operations of Trail-Rite in Tisdale. What were the results of that investigative audit?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, in March of '92, SEDCO accepted a bid

from . . . an offer from a group headed by a Dave Burton to purchase the assets of Trail-Rite.

I want to say that the group was unable to raise the funds that were necessary to complete the deal. And subsequent to that a second offer at a lower price was turned down by SEDCO. Certain conditions arose. The receiver, Ward-Carney Management, was involved and an action was started and I believe is still under way.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I understand that as a result of the investigative audit, SEDCO fired three Trail-Rite employees. Then in April of last year SEDCO launched a lawsuit against those same three employees. The lawsuit alleged that the three employees had used their positions within Trail-Rite to direct business to two new companies they had set up.

Mr. Minister, what is the current status of that lawsuit and is it being pursued by SEDCO?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — My understanding is that that action is under way at the present time.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, shortly after this lawsuit was launched, SEDCO fired the receiver who had instigated the lawsuit. Ward-Carney Management of Saskatoon was replaced by Price Waterhouse even though Ward-Carney had been doing a good job and had the company turning a profit for the first three years. No reason was ever given for this change.

Mr. Minister, why did SEDCO replace Trail-Rite's receiver? Did it have anything at all to do with the lawsuit?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — My understanding is that it had to do with the best operation of the company. Management made the decision and the company has since come out of receivership, has been sold, and is doing very well in the community.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the three Trail-Rite employees who were fired and later sued by SEDCO are now part of the management team of a new company, Advanced Ag & Industrial Ltd. of Biggar. This is the company owned and run by Jack Messer's son and who recently received a major SaskPower contract.

Mr. Minister, in April 1993, your government sued these three individuals for unscrupulous business practices, for directing clients to their new companies. By December 1993, your government awarded their new company, Advanced Ag & Industrial of Biggar, with a major SaskPower contract. That's quite a change of attitude on the part of your government.

Mr. Minister, why would you sue these three people in April and then turn around and award a new company with a major SaskPower contract in December? What changed between April and December?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member is I think drawing a long bow making the allegations that he is. When it comes to the issue of the awarding of contracts by SaskPower, the minister of SaskPower will make comment, as he has told the Assembly, on that issue. It's a completely, as I understand it, separate matter.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I don't think it's separate and neither does anyone else. In fact I would suggest to you that three things happened between April and December of last year that contributed to your government's change of heart. One, you fired the receiver that launched the lawsuit against the three employees; two, you replaced the president of SEDCO with your friend and political ally, Zach Douglas; and three, the people that you were suing went into business with Jack Messer's son. This whole matter has political interference written all over it, and you know it.

Mr. Minister, I believe that Jack Messer used his considerable political influence to alter the government's course of action on this matter and ensure that his son's new company was well positioned to start receiving SaskPower contracts. Is that not the case, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. The assertions that the hon. member makes demand a detailed explanation. And I do not have any knowledge of Jack Messer having the influence that you refer to in the House here today.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of question period I'll be tabling a set of documents. These documents indicate that the SaskPower code of conduct does not exclude relatives of SaskPower officials from doing business with SaskPower. According to an independent external legal counsel who has reviewed this matter, this contract does not appear to violate SaskPower's existing conflict of interest guidelines.

But, Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough. In business and contracting matters, this government is committed to ensuring that cabinet ministers, MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly), public servants, and Crown corporations meet the highest standards of conduct and are seen to be doing so by the public. This contract would not have been acceptable under the tougher guidelines that apply to ministers, MLAs, and senior public officials within executive government.

I can report to the House that the government has therefore instructed the Crown Investments Corporation to immediately examine the feasibility of harmonizing conflict of interest guidelines for Crown corporation senior executives with the stricter guidelines that apply to senior public servants.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, while this contract does not appear to have violated existing guidelines and rules, it does concern me that the system did not understand

that such a contract and the perception created by such a contract might be of potential concern for the public and should have been raised with the board of directors and/or myself. And I would table the documents at the end of question period, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I'll direct my question to the minister responsible for SaskPower. None of that is necessary, Mr. Minister. All you have to do is follow the guidelines that are already in place.

I have been able to obtain a copy of SaskPower's conflict of interest guidelines, even though SaskPower refused to provide them to our office. They say, and I quote:

An employee must not, either himself or indirectly through family members, have a financial relationship with or derive a financial benefit from an individual or an organization doing business with SaskPower where such an employee is in a position to influence a decision within SaskPower pertaining to such an individual or organization.

Mr. Minister, that means that if Jack Messer has any financial relationship whatsoever with his son Michael, he is in conflict of interest regardless of whether this contract was tendered or not.

Mr. Minister, why is Jack Messer exempt from the rules that apply to all other SaskPower employees? Why don't you do what is right and what the people of Saskatchewan want today, and dismiss that man?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — First off, Mr. Speaker, I want to make the point that Jack Messer's not exempt from any guidelines or code of conduct set by this government or the Crown corporations of the province of Saskatchewan.

What the member asserts is that Jack Messer has a financial interest in the matters he raises before this House. I find it very easy for that member in the immunity of this Assembly to be able to make those assertions.

The documents that I will be tabling after question period point out quite clearly that there was not a financial interest involving Mr. Messer, who is president of SaskPower. And either the member is trying to make gain on someone else's reputation, or else they are saying that the people who swore the affidavits are lying. Either way, the member should stand outside this House and make those assertions publicly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the only person that seems to have immunity in this

entire province is Jack Messer. The only person that seems to be able to cancel things like co-generation, jack the power rates up to people in this province, collude people into selling their farm to him, is Jack Messer, Mr. Minister. And it's you and your government that should be doing something about it.

Will you stand up for the people of Saskatchewan and the taxpayers of Saskatchewan and do what is right and get rid of this man before he creates any more problems in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — To my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, Jack Messer has done nothing wrong that would warrant his firing from the Crown corporation SaskPower. If the member opposite has evidence to the contrary, I ask him to provide that evidence.

He makes play on someone's reputation in the immunity of this Assembly. I think that that is wrong, Mr. Speaker. I think that is terribly wrong of the member opposite to do that.

In the issue of co-generation, I take responsibility for the deferral of that project. In the issue of the farm, Jack Messer never got 1 cent for that transaction, and the member clearly knows that.

On the issue of rates, and finally, Mr. Speaker, I would point out, in 1992 the over a hundred million dollars that went from Crown corporations into the Crown Investments Corporation still wasn't enough to pay the debts left over by the Tory administration who put us into the terrible mess that we're experiencing there. The Consolidated Fund still had to put in over \$4 million to pay off the bad debts that that administration left behind, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Labour Legislation

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Minister, the single most important aspect of government policy today is economic development and jobs. If you talk to the average person in Saskatchewan who has a job, they're just happy to have it; and if you talk to someone who doesn't have a job, they just want to be working. Yet your government has introduced a series a labour Bills which will limit new job creation.

The proposed measures make it more costly to run a business, more time consuming to run a business, and more risky than ever to run a business. Mr. Minister, what possible economic advantages do you believe this legislation creates for Saskatchewan? What economic advantages, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I would point out to the member opposite that there isn't any evidence that the

labour legislation is going to result in an economic decline, except in the fevered imagination of members opposite. Otherwise there is no evidence of it.

It is our view, I say to the Liberals and Conservatives opposite who have opposed every single reform, beginning with the abolition of child labour, I say to members opposite, progressive labour legislation is an essential part of an economic restructuring. And that's what this is.

We are in the process of bringing this province to an economic restructuring which will mean we won't just survive in the '90s, we're going to thrive in the '90s. If we're going to thrive in the '90s, we need to restructure the whole gamut, and that includes labour legislation. I wouldn't expect members opposite to understand that any more than your ancestors could understand why child labour should be abolished.

But I think the majority of the public who are much more reasonable, do understand the progressive labour legislation is a part of economic restructuring.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — This question is for the Minister of Economic Development again.

Obviously the partisan political forces that steer this government have decided that this must be a priority item on your agenda. It's clear that somebody wants this on the government agenda as a priority. However there can be no doubt about the tremendous negative implications this has for the economy.

Can you name me one component, one partner in the renewal of the Saskatchewan economy who asked the government to take these drastic measures? Was it the Premier's action committee on the economy, or SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), or the construction association, or the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, or the mining association? Which of these organizations support the Bill?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I want to say that there would be some thousands of people, working people from your constituency, madam, who very much support the changes that make good labour legislation in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — You may want to just go on the doorstep in Regina North West, having promised that you would deliver jobs and good labour legislation, which I know was part of the scenario laid out by the Liberal Party when they were campaigning to steelworkers and others, and explain to them how you today argue for poorer working conditions for working poor in this province under the labour standards at the same time as you argue for 24 per cent increase for judges.

I would advise you that if you were to take the opportunity to go out and knock on doors today with the truth about your position, the 37 per cent increase for your leader, the 24 per cent increase for judges, and poorer working conditions for working people, you might be surprised at the attitude of the thousands of people who support the position that we're taking.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Minister, there are many in the North West constituency who have no jobs. The Saskatchewan economy has been struggling over the past few years, but the level of labour unrest has been relatively minor. Workers and employers alike are focused on the importance of keeping the doors open and keeping their jobs.

At a time when business and labour are working together to remain productive and stabilize jobs, why would you introduce legislation that will create tension in the workplace? What evidence do you have that business/labour relations are in such distress that this legislation is necessary?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear to the member opposite that having poor labour law is not the panacea for having full employment. I want you to compare the situation, for example, in third-world countries and other countries, where they have very poor labour law, and see whether or not the unemployment rate is doing well. Even compare it to Liberal provinces in the Maritimes where the labour law is much less than it is in Saskatchewan; we find the unemployment rate is two or three times higher.

The simple fact is that in Saskatchewan we have a tradition of good labour law. The 1970s, when we had a government that believed in a good relationship between management and labour, we had good labour law and the unemployment rate was by far the lowest in Canada, as it is now.

For you to attempt to raise the issue and put the wedge, as those members in the Conservative caucus did while they were in government, to try to put yourself in a better political position is old-style Ross Thatcher politics and one maybe shouldn't be surprised that the new Liberals are the same old Liberals they were in the 1960s.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Welfare Abuse

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have two or three questions I'd like to ask the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Minister, as you know there are over 81,000 people on welfare in the province. While this is mostly due to your dismal economic record, and probably you don't have to take the blame for it, but we do feel that this is also due in part to individuals abusing the system.

Mr. Minister, can you tell me how many millions of

dollars are paid out each year in welfare payments due to client abuse and mistakes in your own department?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, let me say that this government's attitude towards low income people and people on assistance is positive and proactive — we're trying to find solutions to employment; we're having some successes — rather than punitive, negative, and contradictory like theirs are, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they can't have it both ways. The member says in *Hansard* to me the other day, that people want a cheque from an employer and not the provincial government, yet at the same time he attacks low income people for getting a cheque through social assistance. You can't have it both ways. That's the lowest form of political politics that I have seen in this House.

I'm going to send the member over, Mr. Speaker, a copy of an article; it's called "Cheating the Poor" and it talks about . . . it's from *The Canadian Forum*, April '94 and it talks about all welfare fraud in Canada doesn't add up to one case of tax evasion in B.C.(British Columbia). I'm going to send that over to you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, there is a reason why you won't answer the question and I'll tell you why it is. According to the Provincial Auditor, you aren't even measuring the amount of abuse to your system. The Provincial Auditor has confirmed that there is abuse in the welfare system, and Social Services should be working to bring this abuse under control. Okay?

The auditor said in 1985-86, Social Services started measuring department errors and welfare abuse for the first time. They found a total error rate of 14 per cent, which was costing Saskatchewan taxpayers \$27 million a year. In 1991-92 the error rate had been reduced to 2 per cent and \$4 million a year. That's a saving, Mr. Minister, of \$23 million a year, simply by eliminating errors and abuse of the system. Nothing to do with the people that needed the assistance — nothing to do with them at all.

Mr. Minister, when your government took office you immediately stopped monitoring the amount of overspending due to errors and abuse. Why did you do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I have explained this to the member many times. I sent him over a whole page of new controls that we put into place in the last year or so. The member knows . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, the auditor does believe us because that report ended March 1993.

I told you before in this House that we have reintroduced a random sample verification process since the auditor's report. We've hired 30 new staff for verification of eligibility. We've entered agreements with other western provinces in terms of verification so that people aren't getting duplicate assistance. In addition to that we've announced in the budget new legal family law positions to ensure that we're collecting maintenance.

So we're working very closely with the auditor. If you be honest about what that report says, the auditor is by and large very satisfied with our auditing controls. And we have taken his recommendations and we have improved substantially some . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well that ends March 31, 1993.

I gave you a copy of all the additional controls that we put into place in the last year. But you're not interested in that. You're interested in beating up on low income people.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Will the member from Rosthern please come to order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 56 — An Act to amend The Automobile Accident Insurance Act

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Automobile Accident Insurance Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Hon. Ms. Carson: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the mayor of Creighton who is visiting Regina. Richard Carnegie is up in your gallery and I'd like all members to welcome him today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 54

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Shillington that **Bill No. 54 — An Act to amend The Trade Union Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's again a pleasure to stand in this Assembly and speak regarding Bill No. 54, The Trade Union Act.

Mr. Speaker, I think as I take a few moments today to address some of the concerns and the issues that have been raised with our caucus by concerned individuals across this province ranging from business and employers and business groups and the community leaders, I think it's very important that we continue to remind people of the fact that this government's behaviour regarding the Labour Standards and Trade Union Act has been anything but open and reasonable, honest, and fair.

The minister has continually stood in this Assembly and indicated that he and his colleagues have taken time to extensively sit down and visit with groups and numerous individuals across this province, and yet as we have seen with The Labour Standards Act . . . and I'd just like to raise a couple of concerns here.

The one letter we received said:

Despite an expensive government ad campaign that says, we're listening, the business and employer community had no prior opportunity to review the detailed proposals contained in this legislation. While Labour Minister Shillington and his deputy minister, Merran Proctor, held dozens of meetings over the past last few months, the department continued to be vague and elusive regarding the specific contents they had in mind. The mere act of meeting does not count as meaningful consultation if the department does not reveal its detailed intentions and does not really hear our legitimate concerns.

And, Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say and read:

The business community has never asked for prior input on the design of a so-called cost impact study using highly questionable methods. This cost impact study is nothing more than a clever smokescreen which continues to miss several key cost factors.

And that was comments regarding The Labour Standards Act.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, as we get into The Trade Union Act, we find that the same concerns are raised. That business leaders and community leaders across this province, while the minister would indicate to us that they have been in consultation, continue to tell us that they haven't seen any consultation. They haven't had the opportunity for real and meaningful consultation.

The Minister of Labour may have met with a few people, but it seems that the most important people, or

the people that he should have been listening to and meeting with, were never informed until possibly after the fact; they may have found out that there was a meeting in the area.

And I think those are some of the things that need to be brought to light, that people must be aware of — that the government, if it is going to consult and have meaningful discussion, should have their ad campaign, basically, Mr. Speaker, should lay out where the meetings are. Lay out the format and indicate that all people are welcome to attend. And they should include all affected persons or persons that would be affected.

What I see, Mr. Speaker, and has certainly been raised by Canadian Federation of Independent Business, that they are concerned with the legislation, and rightly so, Mr. Speaker. They are concerned because, as they are concerned with The Labour Standards Act, that it may be technically unworkable. And they've indicated that it will side-swipe and harm more workers than it helps.

And they've also indicated that it represents a huge and costly payroll grab from employers beyond fair payment of wages actually worked. And another concern they raise, it represents an automatic enrichment for powerful union interests in Saskatchewan without having to bargain for it. And why, on the bottom line, Mr. Speaker, it makes Saskatchewan less economically competitive, which means job loss in the province of Saskatchewan.

And those concerns that were raised regarding The Labour Standards Act are the same type of concerns that are raised . . . being raised today regarding The Trade Union Act.

Let me read an article, or read into the record an article put out by the Federation of Independent Business. It starts out by saying:

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business expresses its outrage over Trade Union Act amendments tabled in the Saskatchewan legislature today. This Bill was developed with no opportunity for advance review and comment by business, other than an informational briefing held earlier this morning by Labour Minister Ned Shillington and Economic Development Minister Dwain Lingenfelter.

Even the business representatives on previous task forces and advisory committees were given no opportunity to suggest revisions to any drafts of this legislation. Most importantly, very little of this legislation was developed on the basis of consensus with business and labour organizations.

With a very few exceptions — example, continuing ability of employers to use replacement workers during strike action — most of the legislation represents a serious

capitulation to almost all the demands of organized labour in Saskatchewan. It will seriously tip the balance in favour of large and powerful union interests.

And I think that, Mr. Speaker, is the major concern we have here. Again the minister has talked about the consultation process, has talked about involving all partners that would have an interest and would be affected, as with the Labour Standards and the same with The Trade Union Act.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about either pieces of legislation, the same arguments apply because they affect the workplace in this province; they affect business people; they affect the employers and employees; they affect jobs; and they affect jobs of even students across this province — students who are now in the midst of preparing for or writing final exams and looking for job opportunities to put some money aside to get back to college to complete their degree or the courses that they are taking, and will be finding that there will be fewer job opportunities that are available to them.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have had many business men and women from across my constituency who have raised these concerns with me; who have brought to my attention the concerns and the fact that in looking at part-time work, as we've seen with The Labour Standards Act, they're going to have to cut back because they will not be able to afford the additional costs that are forced upon them.

And The Trade Union Act is the same thing. It basically forces and incurs more costs on employees; and one has to wonder who the government was really listening to. And it would appear that as we've seen with SaskPower, the person running the show would be Jack Messer, not the minister responsible. And in this case I think the person running the agenda for The Labour Standards and The Trade Union Act is none other than the . . . one would maybe call her the hon. Barb Byers, but Barb Byers, who is the president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. It seems, Mr. Speaker, that this agenda is totally dictated by this individual, by one Barb Byers.

The government has introduced labour standards and I've mentioned the fact that this Bill has caused outrage in the business community. The government began slowly to perceive that they were harming the people they meant to help and as we've been discussing and as we've been debating the Bill, we've seen that the minister, time and time again has indicated that maybe there were amendments needed.

But one of the biggest concerns we have, Mr. Speaker, is the fact of not whether there are going to be amendments coming forward regardless of whether it's The Labour Standards or The Trade Union Act, is what the amendments will mean. And also, Mr. Speaker, the fact that these amendments may not cover all the issues when we hear that the government . . . we find out that a number of the terms and

references are going to be passed eventually through regulations, a process which doesn't allow for open public consultation and involvement.

In fact when regulations are passed, they are just passed and moved through Executive Council and it takes away the ability of members to sit in this Assembly and debate the concerns that will be raised by men and women as we've seen with the SaskPower rate increases. Did we have the ability to debate those rate increases, or whether they were justified before they were brought forward? No. It was just a simple stroke of the pen through Executive Council. The rate increases were passed under the form of regulations.

And I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we raise these concerns and that's why we continually ask the minister to show us what regulations will be coming forward after the legislation has passed through this Assembly. What will the regulations include, whether they are with The Labour Relations Board or whether they would be involved with The Trade Union Act. And we've been raising that time and time again and the minister continues to chirp from his seat that he'll have them.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've given the minister ample opportunity and if he's got those why doesn't he just lay it out for us to see and then we will know where we're going. Then the business community will at least understand what is going to be coming down after the fact and we can address those questions today as we continue the discussion. As businesses began to indicate that they were not . . . that the changes to The Trade Union Act were going to, and The Labour Standards Act, were going to harm their ability in hiring part-timers and students.

It seems that the government did take some time to reconsider where they were going. But I think it's more important that the government continue to recognize that there's more to Saskatchewan than the labour movement and the few unionized people across this province; that there are a number of people in the province of Saskatchewan, employees, working very diligently to build the businesses that they're involved in today. And I don't think it's fair for the government just to be running on the whims of one or two individuals who would like to dictate the workplace in this province.

We on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, have insisted that the government take more time to examine the implications of The Labour Standards Act and to go on record with their intentions regarding the regulations. And we will continue to raise that, even as we get into discussion in Committee of the Whole, and as we continue to speak to The Trade Union Act and discuss it in Committee of the Whole.

(1100)

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this is entirely reasonable. It is a very solid suggestion, given the strong outcry against this Bill. But as we've seen in the past, we see again, rather than act responsibly and

step back from the legislation, the minister and his department and the government have begun to use intimidation tactics. And one of the tactics they're using is by pushing and forcing the Bill and just continually pushing it at us.

Because I believe, Mr. Speaker, the reason they continue to throw it at us is the fact that they do not want the issue belaboured, because they do not want to give the business community the ability to finally rally its troops. And not just the business community, but even employees that will be affected across this province. They don't want them to finally see what's coming down and be able to speak up.

They want to have these Bills through this Assembly and out of the way, so that people forget about them until they finally find out at the end of the day, whether it's an employee or a student who can't find a job or an employee who loses his job, or an employer who has to close the door because of the repressive labour legislation in this province.

Mr. Speaker, it seems when you're in trouble with one piece of labour legislation, that it would be appropriate not to push forward with another, more extreme piece of labour legislation. I would think as the government has been sitting back and observing what has been transpiring with . . . and the events surrounding The Labour Standards Act, that they would have been, it would have been more beneficial if they would . . . and they could have gained some points for themselves if they would have taken some time and decided, no we're not going to push The Trade Union Act at this time; there are too many concerns out there regarding The Labour Standards Act and if we're looking at an election in the next year and a half or two years, maybe we need to look at the broad picture in this province and we need to talk to all people; not just a small sector of the people of this province.

Or maybe what I see happening is the same thing that's happening in Ontario, where the Premier of Ontario is now trying to draw back into the fold the union leaders of his province and the unions across his province who are becoming very annoyed at him. And he is doing whatever in his power to bring forward legislation that would draw unions back into the NDP (New Democratic Party) fold, and in fact in some cases it's working. Some of the union organizers have finally admitted that at the end of the day, even though they don't like what the government has done, they will still have to vote for them.

And I think that's what the government here in Saskatchewan are doing. They want to solidify the union support in this province. And one would ask, why? I think a good example, even going back to the last election, in my constituency where the party executive or the party organizer in my constituency happened to take a month leave with pay from his unionized position and worked for the New Democratic candidate in my constituency 24 hours a day. No one else could do that. The people that were helping me, Mr. Minister, didn't have the opportunity

to take time away from their job with pay. They voluntarily gave of their time.

And so I can see why the government would want to bring this type of legislation forward — to appease the unions across this province so that they will again get out there as foot soldiers and work on behalf of NDP candidates across this province in the next provincial election.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think this is a responsible government. A responsible government would not allow one or two individuals or certain groups or organizations to manipulate and demand actions on their behalf. They would take the time — if the government is really truthful and honest with themselves and with the people of this province — they would indeed take the time necessary to consult and talk to all organizations.

This government, I believe, has shown their irresponsibility in the fact that they have barely allowed time for Saskatchewan society to examine and discuss The Labour Standards Act. And the people of Saskatchewan have barely had time to catch their breaths between the two Bills. The stakeholders in this legislation have not had time to assess how it will affect them since they have been focused on The Labour Standards Act.

But I would suggest that's why the government has come forward with The Trade Union Act. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we noticed on Monday when the government introduced The Trade Union Act. It would seem that they were just using another means of trying to focus attention away from where they were going. The fact that they introduced The Trade Union Act on the same day when the Provincial Auditor's report was being released and the release of . . . and they also released the public utilities annual reports. A number of public utilities reports were released to this Assembly at the same time.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the reason why that was done — and it doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand — that the government did that to try and bury the impact of The Trade Union Act under all the other releases that were coming out so that the media wouldn't have the time and wouldn't have the space to cover all the issues and to inform the Saskatchewan public of what was taking place.

And certainly, Mr. Speaker, this is clearly the behaviour of a government that knows it is in trouble. This behaviour alone is reason enough for this Assembly to defeat this Bill. However, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure there are enough members on the government side of the House who will stand up for the real people of this province, for all people of this province, Mr. Speaker. No Bill conceived in such an atmosphere of bad faith can possibly hope to achieve the public consensus that such a major piece of legislation requires.

I think the Minister of Economic Development today, in his response to one of the questions, talked about

dividing and conquering. And I think he suggested that this caucus, the Conservative caucus, had always worked under a system of divide and conquer. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if there's any party that has worked more completely and has worked as easily and has used the terms of divide and conquer as effectively as the government opposite. This government loves to typify our approach to this legislation as divide and conquer.

However, Mr. Speaker, they have used that approach of divide and conquer, but their tactic today seems to be . . . appears to be in the form of a blitzkrieg. They are the ones trying to divide and conquer, enhance powers of arbitrators and mediators that reduce direct communication between workers and management, as we see in The Trade Union Act.

They have outlawed communication from employers while not addressing the problems of threatening communications from unions. And, Mr. Speaker, this would appear to me to be a total affront to the rights of free speech.

And to reiterate that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to read from a letter that we received from . . . one of our local businesses sent a letter that had been sent to him from businesses in Alberta, that they had received from a Doug Faucher, the president of local 1085, the Canadian Auto Workers association. And let me read this letter into the record. It says:

Dear General Manager . . .

And I would take that this was going to GM (General Motors) dealerships across the province of Alberta.

. . . we wish to update you on the labour dispute at Engine Rebuilders Ltd. There are issues which we believe you will find interesting. It has come to our attention that Engine Rebuilders is purchasing some rebuilt goods from suppliers that are not "authorized" remanufacturers. These goods are in turn sold to you and your customers. You, the dealership, have an obligation to sell "authorized" parts to your customers. Meanwhile, Engine Rebuilders will continue to sluff off unauthorized parts to you.

Further to this, we are in the process of declaring a "hot edict" on Engine Rebuilders goods. A "hot edict" is a declaration of a boycott. The most successful boycott in history was Gainers. Let us say that this boycott would be more successful. We know exactly where the parts are sold, at your dealership. This will certainly have an effect on the servicing and parts departments in your dealership.

Further to this, we are contacting all other Unions and the general public. We have found that a good number of vehicles are leased. These people seem to have no problem obtaining their next lease with Chrysler, if we ask them to. This actually translates to a few

thousand vehicles across this country. We have relayed this message to the president of your corporation.

It says:

We prefer not to use these avenues, but it is something that we must do. This will certainly have an effect on your business. We ask that you take your concerns to the Motor Dealers Association, the president of your corporation in Ontario and have these bodies apply pressure on this company to get a collective agreement that is truly fair. This dispute will do nothing for you and your corporation.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please feel free to contact us at any time.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what I've just read into the record is a letter from a union president to the dealerships across Alberta, indicating that if they do not take action, if they do not discontinue buying or purchasing parts from the Engine Rebuilders Ltd. manufacturer, that they will instruct their members to boycott General Motors dealerships and that they will instruct a number of organizations to start leasing from other manufacturers such as Chrysler.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether you would call this a democracy or not, when union leaders can start issuing those kinds of threats to dealerships across the province and to car owners and car manufacturers.

But it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, if we're talking about a democracy, if we're talking about a democratic country where people have the right to voice their views and their opinions, then I would think that if the unions can issue threats — and if this isn't a threat, I don't know what it is — if the unions can issue a threat, then it would seem to me that it would be only fair that businesses at least have the opportunity to discuss employment matters with their employees. And yet The Trade Union Act takes that away. It takes that away from businesses. Again we see that the principle of divide and conquer in favour of none other but the labour unions.

Any communication regarding the individual worker's rights and labour negotiations must now be referred to the bureaucracy, which is not well known for supplying clear, helpful, or timely information.

The government has created new areas of potential resentment between employers and employees — for example, in requiring management to supply benefits to striking workers. If the business offers day care, the employer will have to benefit the workers' kids while they walk in the picket line. This is hardly helpful in creating an atmosphere of harmony.

And that is another of the major concerns that has been raised with us, Mr. Speaker, regarding this Bill — the fact that employers are going to have to pay employee benefits. It says here one of the . . . (inaudible) . . . warrants or changes to the union Act,

employers may have to subsidize strikers.

I think, Mr. Speaker, if we're talking about fairness, some of the onus should be put on the unions themselves. We've just gone through the process of talking about a major strike on the west coast that affected farm producers and agricultural producers across Canada. And at that time, Mr. Speaker, when the unions went on strike, it was just one union; but basically when one union goes on strike, all employees are affected. It shuts down the system. And, Mr. Speaker, because the one union had gone on strike, what did we see? They forced the other unions basically not to cross the picket lines or else.

It really bothers me, Mr. Speaker, when certain groups and certain individuals can decide that they are going to lay down the law. Who is the law? Mind you, we may not have law any more in this province with this government in control because when they make a law, they turn around and change it the very next day if their law doesn't happen to please them.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is unfortunate when a few individuals can determine how all the employees or the labourers across this province and across this country are going to live and whether or not they can go to work. And the fact that when a union goes on strike, this piece of legislation is going to put the onus on the employer to continue to pay the benefits that that employee would be receiving if they were working, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that is very unfair.

Employers don't complain and don't balk at the fact that they have benefits that they pay their employees when they're working. But to have to pay those benefits while they're on strike and even provide a baby-sitting service, Mr. Speaker, is unconscionable and unheard of and certainly is appalling to business groups and leaders across this province.

(1115)

This is just . . . Any communication regarding the individual worker's rights in labour negotiations must now be referred to the bureaucracy, as I indicated, which is not well known for supplying clear, helpful, or timely information.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think as we continue to debate the Bill, we're going to find that more and more people, as they take a clearer view and take the time to really assess The Trade Union Act, will find that where they were sitting back before and thought, well this piece of legislation may not really affect me, are going to look a little more carefully. And they're going to say, boy, maybe it's time I spoke up, maybe it's time I addressed some of these concerns, because certainly there's a number of things there that I should be really concerned about.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment just to talk about another area where I mentioned earlier that one of the headlines read: Employers may have to subsidize strikers. The chamber of Saskatchewan said paying benefits during a strike really annoys them.

And I'd like to quote from an article in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, Thursday, April 14, 1994:

Saskatchewan could become the only province where employers are forced to subsidize their striking workers, warns the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce.

Proposed Trade Union Act changes will require employers to provide holiday pay, sick pay and health benefits to their striking workers, says chamber spokesperson . . .

Bill 54 would make it an unfair labor practice for employers to stop providing benefits during a strike.

And how are benefits defined?

Benefits are defined as anything received by a worker, apart from wages.

The only stipulation is the union that represents the strikers must continue to make any payments that are normally payable by employees.

So, Mr. Speaker, as the Saskatchewan chamber has indicated, they are feeling . . . they are concerned about The Trade Union Act and what it is going to do to the labour force and the ability to enhance and draw businesses into this province, as we have with The Labour Standards Act.

Mr. Speaker, the government has taken away numerous prerogatives of management in negotiations, taking away management's ability to call for a final vote offer.

Now I would think, Mr. Speaker, that if the unions feel that they want to unionize and they want to give their membership and allow their membership the opportunity to vote, wouldn't it be fair that if they are given that opportunity, that management can call for a final vote offer as well and ask their employees?

And I think it would be only fair as well to have that vote be taken through a secret ballot, through a mediator or someone outside of involvement with union and management so that at the end of the day, employees would know that as they voted on a contract offer or voted whether or not to unionize, that they had the real ability to vote without interference by union organizers and even management.

And that, Mr. Speaker, would allow management to present their offers very openly and straightforward. It would also give the ability for union organizers to present their proposals and then let employees vote as we do in a general election, secretly, through a secret ballot.

And the fact that we can . . . What it does, Mr. Speaker, is allows people to go to the polls without harassment. And that's one thing we're fortunate about in this country; we can do that. We can go to the polls and

not be harassed. That's a far cry from many other countries of the world where people go to the polls in fear. And they go to the polls to vote not knowing whether they will even leave that poll alive.

So I think if we're talking about true democracy, The Trade Union Act, rather than hindering the ability of employers and employees to work together, should be looking at ways in which it can enhance that.

Mr. Speaker, the governments have set up new Draconian penalties for unfair labour practices that can be based on nothing more than hearsay and which have no avenue for appeal. And what I'm saying here, the government is also undermining the competitive business atmosphere in many ways, for example slowing down needed technological change by throwing up time constraints on how quickly they can be implemented.

That means if a business decides that they want to bring some more technology and mechanization into their business, they must have a period of time, inform the employees that there is going to be a change-over on some of their technology, some of their machinery; and that period of time, especially if that technology may affect employees' jobs, they must give notice.

What the legislation is doing, Mr. Speaker, is limiting the ability of the employer or the manufacturer or the business person to put that technology in place. Even if he's got everything ready, he's limited in putting it in place so it may be 90 days to six months before he gets that opportunity to really effectively enhance and build his business.

The government is also undermining the competitive business atmosphere by hampering the abilities of businesses to enhance the job opportunities that may be out there. Also they have hampered the ability of businesses to achieve cost savings by restricting the ability of unionized businesses to tender out services. The Minister of Labour swears that this is not happening, but given the undue speed with which the legislation is being pushed, we have had no opportunity to get this clarified.

And we continue to ask and we will ask, as I've indicated. I'd ask the minister even today to clarify these issues. All the more reason that this legislation should be pulled until issues like this can be clarified.

The legislation not only fails to address the ongoing problems with workplace democracy, especially regarding the availability of secret ballots, it actually makes these problems worse. Certification and decertification have now become even more undemocratic.

And as I was saying before, Mr. Speaker, if we're really talking about democracy, and the ability, and union organizers having a desire to go into any workplace and unionize, right now they can go in and they can talk to those employees about establishing a union. But if the employer should dare raise the question with his employees about whether it's right or not to

unionize, and would suggest it's in their best interests not to unionize, that employer could be taken before the Labour Relations Board and be accused of an unfair labour practice.

And at the end of the day, under the new rules under The Trade Union Act, that Labour Relations Board could force a union contract on that employer and force him into a union and even force the employees into a union, even though maybe the majority of them were not in favour of a union.

A business can be certified if a related company anywhere in Canada has been certified. And if the decertification vote can be annulled if a small minority of workers claim that unfair labour practice have been followed, in both cases the wishes of the majority of workers in the business are ignored. It is hard to see how this will serve to build consensus.

And again, Mr. Speaker, I have to refer to the problem facing the Woolco workers in Moose Jaw, where the majority of people wanted to decertify. But because of the Draconian rules we have in this province, it just takes a minor group of people.

If a group of employees form a meeting and even if it's only 40, or 30 or 40 per cent of the employees show up and decide we want to unionize and we're going to take a vote to unionize, and if 50 per cent plus one of only 30 or 40 per cent of the employees vote in favour, they're unionized. But to decertify, or to not unionize, they need 70 per cent of all employees voting against it. Mr. Speaker, that to me seems hardly fair.

Again as I indicate, given the undue haste with which this Bill is being pushed and given the numerous serious problems with the Bill that deserve further attention, I think, Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate that we take the time and continue to take the time to reiterate the points that have been brought out before us.

I also understand from this piece of legislation, The Trade Union Act, that there are some people within the union circles that are still not totally happy with it. And one wonders if this is just a façade to try and get the rest of the people in Saskatchewan to begin to ask and question whether or not this piece of legislation isn't as bad as many people would make it appear to be.

And I talk about I believe one of the government members has indicated that he is going to bring an amendment to the Bill because he feels that . . . here's the headline I wanted to raise, Mr. Speaker.

And again this is taken from the Saskatoon **Star-Phoenix**, Friday, April 8:

Backbencher vows to toughen labor bill with amendments.
(And this was talking about the fact that) Labor Minister Ned Shillington will introduce amendments to the Trade Union Act on Monday.

And government backbencher Bob Lyons says

if the long-awaited bill doesn't contain provisions banning the use of replacement workers during strikes, he will introduce his own amendments in a private member's bill.

The Regina Rosemont MLA said he would bring forward amendments on other important issues if they're left out of Shillington's version.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I begin to ask myself, if the member from Regina Rosemont is bringing amendments in, if the government is leaving them out, I wonder if this just isn't another way of bringing amendments to The Trade Union Act in through the back door.

If the government found that it would be offensive to have these type of amendments, and the member from Regina Rosemont continues to talk of replacement workers as scabs, I think that is unfortunate that people in this province and in a free democracy would refer to individuals who want to work, as scabs.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think unions would want to refer to their membership in that way, but it seems unionized people or labour leaders across this province have no problem in picking up on the honest, ordinary citizen of this province who would like to work and put in a full day's work.

And maybe that's the problem as we've been finding out, and as we've been hearing from different workplaces, Mr. Speaker, where people have gone to work and put in a full day's work and found out that maybe they were working a little too hard, maybe they were being a little too diligent in the work that they were doing, maybe they should slack off a bit, maybe they were ...

And the reason that they were being confronted by union organizers is because they were showing up a number of the other union people who were sloughing off. And you know when people do not take their work seriously, that impacts the business and the manufacturer and the employer and their ability to be economically viable and to live in our competitive society.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I hear the member from Regina Rosemont suggesting that if this Bill does not have that provision, that he's going to bring it in, I ask myself if it's not the government's way of again using the back door to cover off a few areas that the labour organizations and the labour groups across this province like the Barb Byers and the George Rosenau's are trying to cover. And I ask you again, is that freedom? Is that how democracy operates?

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to raise a number of concerns that have also been raised by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Saskatchewan business groups and chambers. This Bill, as they've indicated, would bring serious harm to Saskatchewan's competitiveness. And as we're looking at a time, Mr. Speaker, when we are trying to enhance job opportunities in this province ... We've just heard my colleague, the member from Wilkie, just again raise

the fact that there are over 81,000 people in this province on unemployment ... or on welfare, pardon me, Mr. Speaker — 81,000 people on welfare and growing.

And the Minister of Social Services just said I believe it was two or three weeks ago, that the welfare rolls had levelled off. And yet we found out shortly after he made that comment that there was another increase of 1,500 people in the last month. Not only coupled with that, Mr. Speaker, we find that the government may hang its hat on the fact that the unemployment has decreased.

Unemployment may have decreased a marginal amount, Mr. Speaker, but at the same time there are fewer jobs in this province than there were even back in 1991. There are some 2,000 fewer jobs even at the start of this year in this province, some 13,000 fewer than there were in 1991. So where are the people going? What's happening, Mr. Speaker?

I guess what we're finding out is the reason that the unemployment rates have gone down is there are two things. Number one, people have finally given up hope of finding jobs, because there aren't jobs available and they've gone on welfare. Or else they have left the province. And, Mr. Speaker, the reason that there aren't jobs available is because this province has become a very uncompetitive place to set up and establish a business, and the government may wonder why they're having difficulty trying to entice businesses and trying to get people to invest money in business opportunities in this province. Well maybe they should take a look at the legislation that they have introduced.

And we know what's happened regarding The Workers' Compensation Act and we saw The Occupational Health and Safety Act of the last session. And now again we see more repressive legislation through The Labour Standards Act and The Trade Union Act.

(1130)

This Bill also creates major uncertainty caused by huge powers given to politically appointed agents. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says the government has created an historically unprecedented shift in powers to the politically appointed Labour Relations Board, as well as to a cadre of other politically appointed arbitrators, special mediators, and government officials.

And that's one of the concerns we've been raising time and time again, and that's why we're calling for a legislative committee, Mr. Speaker, that would allow for an all-party committee in this legislature, responsible to this legislature, responsible to the members of this Assembly, to look at public appointees rather than just allowing Executive Council to make those appointments.

And I would believe, Mr. Speaker, in view of what the CFIB (Canadian Federation of Independent Business)

has indicated, it would be appropriate that we continue to push for that type of committee. Because what we will see with the Labour Relations Board, it will be a political appointment or a committee made up of political appointees, appointed by Executive Council, and the wishes of this government and the Labour minister and the unions of this province will be forced upon us.

They continue: all businesses in Saskatchewan, whether currently unionized or not, now will have considerable anxiety and fear over the possible abuse of power by these political appointees.

Because I don't believe there's anything in the Bill that really makes the . . . and causes the Labour Relations Board to be answerable to labour or to the business community, but to Executive Council. And they have a right to be concerned.

They point out another problem they see. For example, the Labour Relations Board will soon have extra powers to automatically declare a small business unionized or to stop decertifications regardless of any low number of union cards signed and notwithstanding any vote of the majority of workers which resulted in rejection of union proposals. Automatic certification and decertification will be based on the judgement of these political appointees as to whether or not an unfair labour practice interfered with the process.

Again as I indicated earlier, look at what happened to the employees in Moose Jaw. They went to the Labour Relations Board. It was their avenue of appeal. They were overwhelmingly in favour of decertifying so they could guarantee their jobs.

But what do we see, Mr. Speaker? The Labour Relations Board decided instead of listening to the majority, of listening to a few heavy-handed union organizers and wouldn't allow the decertification. So today we find that people are just living one day at a time, wondering how long that they will have a job.

What we see, politically appointed bureaucrats will determine whether contracting out from any unionized employer or other non-unionized employers should be prevented. And the interesting part about this process, Mr. Speaker, as well, is the fact that the appointment of the members on the Labour Relations Board is for a period of, I believe it's 5 or 6 years.

And what could happen and possibly will happen and no doubt will happen — I shouldn't say possibly will — no doubt will happen, is that the government will wait until just prior to calling an election to appoint the new Labour Relations Board.

Now I guess the only action if the government is defeated and a new party comes to power, they will have to take the same initiative that this government has taken over the past number of years to retroactively change The Trade Union Act so that they can take a look at removing the political appointees

that this government will put in place on the Labour Relations Board.

Politically appointed bureaucrats will also be able to unilaterally impose a first union contract upon a newly certified employer. They will also gain new powers to unilaterally determine successorship obligations to continue the unionized status on contracts of businesses after sale, spin-off, or transfer.

You have to ask yourself, Mr. Speaker, how many people are going to look at purchasing a business already in existence if they are going to be forced to continue the unionized status, continue the contracts of businesses after sale, spin-off, or transfer.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think anybody, I don't think anyone with the ability, and has the financial status, would want to come into this province and continue or to take over a business or to buy out a business if he's faced with these restrictions.

Another issue they raised, the politically appointed Labour Relations Board will be given enormous other powers including the right to make interim and rectification orders, order fiscal compensation, amend court orders, etc. These enormous powers would be vested in full-time political appointments that would be locked in with absolute immunity and job protection for up to five years.

And that was the argument I just presented a moment ago. What option will a new government have, should the government change at the next provincial election? I guess the only option is to look at what this government has done over the past number of years and institute the same type of retroactive legislation to change these policies so that we can make it a more democratic process.

And there are a number of other major concerns. The new Act amendments will put a permanent halt to any government attempt to downsize and save the taxpayers money through contracting out to several categories of low-cost, non-unionized workers. And, Mr. Speaker, this amazes me and I'm totally amazed that the government themselves would not realize that they are tying their own hands through this Trade Union Act; that at a time of fiscal restraint, a time when a government is talking about deficit reduction, that they would bring in an Act that would even tie their own hands. And that is certainly unthinkable and unquestionable.

And I think I would ask the minister and I would ask the Premier and I would ask the members of the Executive Council and government members to take a serious look at what they are doing to themselves. Are they so tied in to the George Rosenau's and the demands of the Barb Byers's that they're going to overlook even the fiscal restraints and the deficit reduction and their commitment to reducing the deficit in this province by tying themselves into contracts where, if they have an opportunity to tender out to and receive a service at a lower cost, that they will not be able to do it because The Trade Union Act

does not allow them to do that? I think that's unthinkable.

The new Act also tips the balance in several other areas, including less managerial exclusions, less employer rights to communications and free speech, greater employer delays and difficulties in implementing technological change, and the taking away of employer's right to request supervised strike votes.

Finally, the new Act still does not give individual workers the fundamental, democratic right to mandatory secret ballot votes or any basic rights of full informational disclosure about the costs and implications of union fees and operations.

Huge fines and penalties can now be imposed by unions on individuals, which may further add to big union intimidations. And, Mr. Speaker, I have a headline here; this is from the *Regina Leader-Post*, "Union fines will now be debts."

Or actually it is the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, April 13:

Workers who cross their own picket line could find themselves in court if they don't pay fines imposed by their union under proposed changes to The Trade Union Act.

Who's running this province? Or who will be running this province? Who is in control?

For years, unions have fined members who work during a strike but never had the power to collect.

The Trade Union Act amendments introduced Monday say union-imposed fines will now be a debt due and may be recovered through the courts.

Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union president George Rosenau says the bill should help, but he's disappointed it doesn't force employers to deduct fines from employees' pay on the union's behalf.

This appears to me, Mr. Speaker, to be a big bullying tactic by the unions of this province. Why should people who want to work and who are happy with the workplace, who are happy with the work environment, who are happy with their wages, who are happy with the benefits — why should they be forced to stay at home simply because a handful of people want to strike and demand higher salaries?

And what I find interesting, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about this striking, remember the debate going on between the teachers of this province and the STF, and bargaining. It wasn't that long ago they were threatening of going out on strike. And, Mr. Speaker, they were threatening of going out on strike while this government was cutting back payments to local school boards — payments, Mr. Speaker, which were going to lead to the reduction of teaching positions in

this province. And yet the union had the audacity to go to their membership and say, we've got to go on strike to demand more time and more . . . we've got to demand more from our employers, from the school boards across this province.

Well how can you demand more when there will be less? Isn't it time that unions recognized that maybe job opportunities and the ability to a solid and sound job is more important than demanding more from a society that doesn't have more to give? And what they are going to be able to do under this legislation is they're going to be able to tell people, whether they be health care workers, whether they be educators, whether they be employees of a manufacturing business in this province that is just on the verge of making it and just struggling to survive — if the union decides they want to strike and people decide that they want to go to work, they will not be able to because the union will be able to bully them into going on strike, because the union themselves will fine their own membership. Well that is democracy at its fullest.

Mr. Speaker, no wonder the chamber, the business community, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and even the government itself should be concerned with its own legislation when we look at the repressive acts and the repressive forms of government and democracy that this government is showing us.

In summary, the CFIB says:

These amendments, along with the uncertainty caused by massive new powers to make regulations under the new Labour Standards Act, combine to place a dark cloud over Saskatchewan. The NDP government has now created a very unstable labour climate that will weaken investor confidence and cost the province jobs.

The CFIB and other business groups are determined to continue efforts to bring greater clarity, balance, and democratic accountability to this labour legislation. We shall be relentless in our fight for fairness.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is the reason that my colleagues and I are standing in this Assembly and will continue to stand to address a number of these issues, to bring to the forefront the concerns of business people, and it should be the concerns of individuals looking for employment in this province as well. When we look at the labour rolls, when we look at the fact that we have fewer jobs and we look at the number of people who are looking for work, it should be a concern to them that they would allow a government to bring in more repressive labour legislation that would take away the job opportunities or their job opportunities and that would take away from their future.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the rate increases that we've seen through the Crown corporations and

we look at the . . . the auditor pointed out the other day the unfunded pension liabilities that are . . . that we have in this province. And we look at the debt of this province, Mr. Speaker; someone has to pay for that debt. People without money cannot pay the taxes that are needed to pay for the debt.

And the members opposite are suggesting we should have thought of that 10 years ago. Well it should have started about 20 years ago. And I continue, as I indicated, as my colleague indicated earlier on today, where the Minister of Finance said it's not appropriate to raise the unfunded pension liabilities and bring them forward as deficit problems, as part of the debt. Well that's what the former government of Mr. Blakeney did, Mr. Speaker. They said it wasn't appropriate. That's why they didn't include the unfunded pension liabilities; that's why they didn't include the debt in the Crowns prior to 1982.

And again, they do the same thing. They are just trying to put a cloud over the people's eyes so they don't realize what they're really doing. And that's why it's so difficult for the auditor to bring out those points — the same thing.

(1145)

And I just want to relate one issue that took place recently in the federal parliament, where the media all of sudden finally realized that what the federal government — doing no different that what this NDP government has done — what the federal government did was inflate the debt to make it look as if the former government wasn't even on track in their deficit reduction. And now even the Reform Party has finally been able to point out the fact that Mr. Martin did inflate the debt, just like the minister responsible and the Deputy Premier in his first budget of 1990 — or '91-92, pardon me — where he inflated the deficit; when if he would have followed the deficit reduction plan set out by the former minister of Finance, we would have a balance on the operational side of government.

And the minister of Community Services laughs from her seat, when she was part of a committee that was continually lobbying government for more financing for her community and policing services, and in infrastructure and in water and sewer, Mr. Speaker. And the minister talks about wasting money.

Who was there lobbying the government? And I happened to be part of a . . . chairing the committee that she was part of where she was lobbying the government for more money, rather than accepting her responsibility as the mayor for Melfort at the time and arguing that maybe the government should be looking at ways of reducing the debt, not trying to hand out more money to community governments, or local governments at that time.

Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the minister responsible for Community Services would like to chirp from her seat and would stand and defend the legislation, the regressive legislation, that this

government, her government, is bringing forward.

I don't know, I'm not exactly certain, but maybe that minister never did have a business. I know that her husband's in law, in a field, a profession, that finds it very easy to draw from the taxpayers and from the people of this province by continually working for an organization that certainly almost seems at times preys upon innocent individuals.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this Act, it's important that we realize that if we are going to build this province, if we are going to encourage individuals to come to this community or to this province and to build and to enhance business and job opportunities, that the two pieces of legislation before us today certainly do anything but enhance that opportunity.

And they create an atmosphere where I believe, Mr. Speaker, it is even going to be more difficult, and I predict more difficult in the future to encourage investment in the province of Saskatchewan, with such repressive legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is certainly more that I could add, but I know my colleagues want to get into the debate at this time. So I thank you for the opportunity for having had to stand in this Assembly and address this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure today to enter into this debate, the debate on The Trade Union Act.

I've listened with great care while the member for Moosomin has espoused the opposition view, their understanding of organized working people and of corporations and how the economies of Saskatchewan and other places have worked.

It was interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, in that I heard the member talking about the Conservative and Liberal view of organized labour and of The Trade Union Act and of the proposed changes that we're making and how they're opposed to every single thing that we're doing in this Act.

And I couldn't help but reflect on the nine and a half years that they formed the government. And I was thinking of all the hundreds and thousands of people across the province that I spoke to in that nine and a half years. And there was precious few that felt that the rules were fair. There was a large number certainly of working men and women that felt they were being very, very unfairly treated under the rules of the day.

But it was interesting to me to note that there was a fair number of business people that also were expressing concerns that our labour legislation in Saskatchewan had been allowed to become obsolete or to become not as clearly effective as it should and could be.

It seems to me that even though we think that 1994 is the same as 1993 only you add one, and 1993 was the

same as 1992 only you add one more year, even though the years may seem to be exactly the same, if you take a snapshot of Saskatchewan in 1994 and a snapshot of Saskatchewan in 1984 and a snapshot in 1974, you find very, very major differences.

In 1984 we were very clearly on the way down economically. There were at that time fewer jobs available. The economy had clearly stalled or gone into reverse in some ways.

In 1974, 10 years before that, the absolute opposite was true; Saskatchewan was just a boom province. Jobs were plentiful. Farmers were making money hand over fist. We were at that time in a very high inflationary cycle; that's something that we were not in in 1984, although in 1984 we were in a high interest rate period.

And now in 1994 we have relatively low inflation and relatively low interest rates.

Point being, you can't simply say that because — I'll use a very extreme — because at one time there was child labour allowed, that there should always be child labour allowed. Our societies evolve. The Trade Union Act is an evolutionary Act and one that, simply put, requires some modest updating from time to time to keep it in tune with the realities of the day. This Bill, this Trade Union Act, does just that in a very, very effective way.

Mr. Speaker, amongst other things, this Trade Union Act is to promote productive collective bargaining and cooperative dispute resolution by doing a number of things. It requires parties to bargain collectively and to apply agreements in good faith. I'll be addressing the methods in which we administer and enforce that Act a little later on, but it requires that the bargaining take place and the agreements be applied in good faith.

It provides assistance now, very real and meaningful assistance, in reaching a first agreement. That is, where an operation is newly organized, it is not terribly unusual for both the newly formed union and the management to have some difficulties in attaining that first agreement. Part of it is there's no history of a working relationship between the union and the management. But we provide some very real assistance that is not just a help to those newly organized working women and men, but it's a very real help to the newly organized company and the management of that company because frankly it takes two to fight. It takes two to get into any significant difficulty and often it takes a steady, outside, third hand provided for in this Trade Union Act to get things back on an even keel so that that business place can do what it does best and continue to make money. And of course if the business place is making money, the employees are working and things are relatively good. Not to say there aren't individual problems crop up everywhere; indeed we all have problems from time to time.

The Act will be providing more labour relations

services that include the appointment of mediators to assist in resolving disputes. It will provide for faster and less costly arbitration procedures to help settle disputes over the interpretation or application of agreements. And I think it's important to note here: faster and less costly arbitration procedures — now show me any self-respecting business person that would object to a faster, less costly, dispute settlement mechanism and I'll show you a business owner that is on the way out.

Businesses have to operate more effectively now than they perhaps had to in the past. Certainly the most proactive businesses are the ones that are on the leading edge, that are looking for ways to do things better, faster, in a less costly manner; because they know that improves their bottom line. And that's provided for in this Trade Union Act.

We also are going to be dealing with grievances through mediation and there's improvements in the Act on how that can take place. There will be improving arbitration provisions that will require settlement by arbitration for disputes over the application or interpretation of an agreement. There will be arbitration procedures if none are available in an agreement, those arbitrations procedures provided for through the Department of Labour — that again to the benefit of working women and men and to the benefit of the companies.

There are a number of other things, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to talk about all of it because I'm sure there's others that are wanting to get into this debate. I'm not trying to signal that I'm nearing the end of my comments, but I'm not trying trying to be all-inclusive and I want to make that clear; not trying to be all-inclusive in this Bill.

We will be ensuring that the terms and conditions of collective agreements remain in force until replaced by a new agreement. And that is very important — a very important and key consideration for organized people, organized women and men throughout Saskatchewan. So in the Act the terms and conditions of collective agreements will remain in force until replaced by a new agreement, and that is written right in and part of this Act.

We'll be updating the rules governing strikes and lockouts which nobody, but nobody, enjoys going on a picket line. I've yet to walk a picket line with an employee that said gee, it sure is fun out here. I have walked many picket lines and many of my friends, throughout organized labour particularly, will know that. They will know that I don't simply walk with them; I'm asking, as we walk the picket line, for what is it precisely that is needed to end this labour dispute, this strike, or this lockout.

I've always been impressed, Mr. Speaker, by the fortitude, the future vision of people, women and men, walking the picket lines. They don't do so lightly. You must recognize that to be in a strike or a lockout position all too often means your income drops to zero.

Now there are some unions that have set aside strike fund reserves and they're able to provide some very limited grocery money at least in a short-term basis, but all too often on a picket line workers are walking a picket line with no hope of receiving any remuneration. They are there for a principle; they are there to try and improve not only their own personal position, if I may describe it that way, in life, be it financial or something else.

But they're there to try and make our Saskatchewan a better place for all people, including for the sons and daughters of opposition members who may wind up working in some of those workplaces. The easiest thing in the world to do when you have a problem is to just fold up your tent and move on and go somewhere else. The more difficult and the more long-range view is to take a problem and attack it head on, try and resolve that problem, and sometimes that is done at a very huge expense.

The rules governing strikes and lockouts, we're also in this Act going to be permitting parties to request the appointment of a special mediator after a strike has lasted 30 days and allowing for final offer votes on the recommendation of the special mediator.

(1200)

This, too, is new, and it should enhance the end of disputes by providing for mediation after a 30-day strike. Clearly after 30 days, both sides are usually locked quite firmly into positions. The mediator at that point will have a very huge job to try and get the two parties to reach some agreement, but we are providing that mediator in the hopes of avoiding very prolonged lockouts or strikes.

There are a few that come to mind — the Pineland Co-op in Nipawin, of course, being the longest lockout in the history of Saskatchewan. And it's unfortunate that that happened and my heart goes out, every time I think of it, my heart goes out to the working women and men that were involved in that dispute. But there are a number of others; I don't want to beat them to death.

In this legislation, this new Trade Union Act, Mr. Speaker, we are providing mechanisms for workers and employers to address major workplace change. We're doing so by ensuring collective agreements remain in force after the changes in ownership, management or jurisdiction by empowering the Labour Relations Board to determine what rights and obligations continue after a successorship.

We are also ensuring that contractors who are awarded . . . servicing contractors respect existing collective bargaining obligations. We're confirming that an employer will continue to be bound by any existing collective bargaining obligations when a business becomes subject to Saskatchewan jurisdiction, and we're preventing employers from avoiding collective bargaining obligations by operating through related companies.

In other words we are saying, no more of the spin-off companies that were so prevalent in the decade that the Conservative administration formed the government. No more simply setting up a spin-off company because you want to avoid dealing with a union. That is enshrined in this legislation, and it is something that many of us have fought and tried for a goodly number of years to get. And I'm delighted, in this Trade Union Act, to see that the rules have been levelled out, if you like.

There of course will continue to be disputes. The world has ever been thus. But our job is to provide as even-handed rules for dealing with those disputes as we possibly can.

The Trade Union Act will improve the administration and enforcement of the Act, Mr. Speaker. And I think that this is one of the very most important parts of the new Act because any set of rules that anybody can devise are absolutely useless unless you have in place a mechanism and clear outline of how it will be administered.

This Act pays a great deal of attention to the administration and enforcement of the Act. In The Trade Union Act, we are clarifying the Labour Relations Board's remedial powers regarding orders issued on an interim basis pending final hearings. We clarify the Labour Relations Board's remedial powers regarding orders to rectify contraventions under this Act. We clarify the Labour Relations Board's remedial powers regarding compensation for monetary loss suffered by employees, employers, and trade unions as a result of violations of this Act as well as amendment or correction of orders.

We are doing other things, again I'm not going to hit the whole list, but we are clarifying and limiting exclusions from bargaining units. I know from having been involved in more than one organizing drive that there's always some question as to who should be in scope and who should be out of scope. Now we are clarifying and limiting exclusions from these bargaining units, and that will serve everybody well, knowing with some greater degree of definition what is in and what is out of scope.

Now does that mean that every single position is going to be named? Probably not. But if . . . to the extent that we can narrow the gap, the grey area, I think it's a very, very positive thing.

We will also be providing a mechanism for collection of fines by unions from their members. Now, Mr. Speaker, I heard the member from Moosomin talking about that and asking, well who in the world is running the province? Well who does the member from Moosomin think runs the trade unions? The trade union membership through their meetings, be they monthly, quarterly, or certainly annual, run their unions. Who does the member from Moosomin think votes in a strike vote? Who does the Leader of the Opposition think votes in a strike vote? I see you chirping from your seat. It's the very union members

who vote.

In any democracy you hold a vote, you hold a vote, the majority carries the day. Unions are very tough in terms of they must have a relatively high percentage before they consider themselves to have a strike mandate. I know of no instances that come to mind where 50 per cent plus one vote has led to a strike. Indeed many, many trade unions won't even consider going on strike until they have a 75 per cent-plus; I think that's more the norm.

Now when you have three out of four saying, we must on principle go on strike, we must on principle withhold our services to try and get the employer's attention, I think that recognizing that the trade union is a democratic organization, that you must give that trade union an ability to run its own affairs. Divided, working women and men fall — divided we fall; together we stand. Another way of putting it is, a union can hang together and win, or hang individually and lose.

And this Trade Union Act, I think goes a long ways to creating the fairness that is needed in 1994 and indeed into the future. I think these changes should take us, hopefully, into the next millennium, past the year 2000, before there's any more major changes required into The Trade Union Act. But if I may look into the future, frankly I suspect that some time shortly after the year 2000 there will be a need again to make some amendments to The Trade Union Act.

And I say that not out of any sense of it being my party forming the government at that stage; I don't know that. The voters will decide. I think my view is it really doesn't matter who is in power, some time shortly after the year 2000, The Trade Union Act will need to be revised again.

Now this is where it gets important for people of Saskatchewan. Businesses need rules and need a method of operation that is straightforward and understandable. They need mechanisms to resolve disputes; they need a sense of fairness; they need order. That, I think, this Trade Union Act goes a long way to providing.

There are a few, a select few, who decry these changes. In many cases it's the same select few, Mr. Speaker, who in 1972 said that when The Trade Union Act was last amended in . . . major amendment in 1972, they said this is going to grind business to a halt; this is going to stop employment.

Well that was 1972. You remember early in my speech I talked about 1974, two years later, everything is booming in Saskatchewan. Jobs galore; businesses making money hand-over-fist. It seemed — and unfortunately it wasn't so — but it seemed in 1974 that the good times could never possibly end. That's what it seemed like, although I confess a great many people knew otherwise, and they were wise.

But in 1972 I also remember . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and I thank the Leader of the

Opposition for suggesting I was still in diapers; indeed I like to consider myself relatively young but wasn't quite that young.

An Hon. Member: — You weren't walking too many picket lines.

Mr. Trew: — The Leader of the Opposition says in 1972 I wasn't walking any picket lines, and he's absolutely correct. But in 1974 I was part of my first union organization drive and I played a part in that on behalf of the Grain Services Union, that I will be perpetually proud of because of the part that I and a great many other people played. We got the livestock division of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool into the Grain Services Union fold. And the working women and men in the livestock division of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool have been far better off in the ensuing 20 years for that particular unionization drive. And I'm very proud of the job that I had then.

In 1972 there was opposition members and there was some employers — some; I emphasize some, a select few — that said under The Occupational Health and Safety Act that was introduced then, that there would never again be an honest day's work done by a working person in Saskatchewan.

Why did they say that? Amongst other things, was the rallying cry of that legislation, and I can still recall vividly Bob Sass going around Saskatchewan saying, you have the right to refuse dangerous work. And that became the rallying cry for some employers and the opposition. They predicted that no worker would ever again do a job they didn't like. How wrong they were. How absolutely dead wrong they were, Mr. Speaker.

They predicted the sky was falling when The Trade Union Act was changed in '72. When The Occupational Health and Safety Act was introduced in 1972, the sky was falling, they said. By 1974 Saskatchewan was booming — jobs galore. A good labour management working relationship was the rule rather than the exception.

And then I come even . . . I'm going to skip to much more current, where in 1973 we introduced changes to The Workers' Compensation Act. Opposition Conservatives and Liberals said, this is going to be the end of employment; this is going to be the end of any gains in Saskatchewan. Together the Tweedledum and Tweedledummers said, this is the end for Saskatchewan. How wrong they were, Mr. Speaker, how wrong.

The same year we introduced amendments to occupational health and safety — same people saying, no this is no good; you can't do this. You can't provide workers with a right to go to work and come home just as healthy as they were when they went to work. You can't make sure to the extent that it's humanly possible for people to be able to go to work and not lose their life or risk major injury. How wrong they were. We're proving that in a daily way and those pieces of legislation have been beneficial to everyone. Certainly in terms of occupational health and safety,

any — any injury, any incident that can be prevented is a dollar, many dollars, saved. And employers, good employers, know that and many of them do.

(1215)

Now we've got 1994. We introduced labour standards. Again we have the opposition Conservatives and Liberals standing together saying Labour Standards Act is going to end everything.

In 1994 we introduced this, The Trade Union Act, and we have opposition Conservatives and opposition Liberals standing together saying this is a flawed Act; this is going to shut down Saskatchewan. They would have us believe that if we could just somehow return to the nine and a half years of the former administration that everything would be all right. Well working people and many corporations, many business owners, know that . . . I mean, it's patently obvious that that is not correct.

They look at themselves in 1982 when the former government took office; 1991, nine and a half years later, and we all ask ourselves, am I better off or worse off? Unfortunately for a great many, far too many people and far too many businesses, the answer is quite clearly no, they're not better off. They were not better off after nine and a half years of floundering around doing everything you could to make Saskatchewan unmanageable; to create a fiscal mess that is impossible or next to impossible to work its way out of; and doing everything you could to make labour legislation match that of third-world countries. Everything they could. They talked about the need for us to be competitive.

Well, Mr. Speaker, competitive. Let's look at perhaps some Asian countries. We see pictures of farmers tending their rice paddies. They've got a water buffalo in front and somebody walking along behind the plough, eking out the barest existence they possibly could. Do members opposite propose that our farmers hitch up a mule and walk behind a plough like the very earliest settlers in this province did? I don't think so. I don't think that's what they're really advocating.

And I just can't for the life of me understand why it is that the Conservatives and the Tories will say look, farmers are the most efficient farmers in the world right here in Saskatchewan. Would you agree with that, Mr. Leader of the Opposition — that farmers in Saskatchewan are the most efficient farmers in the world? I see you nodding in the affirmative.

Now I don't know why it is that farmers can become so efficient. And we do agree on that — we've got some of the very best farmers in the entire world right here in Saskatchewan. Why is it that you think farmers should be moving ahead, moving forward, moving into the future, moving into the next millennium, and yet you would have working women and working men going back to the days of child labour? Why is it you would not have working people progress? Why do you have so little faith in the working women and men of Saskatchewan? Why is it you have so little faith

you think that workers are somehow not competitive?

Workers in Saskatchewan are very well educated, highly motivated, want the businesses to do well. Why? Because in Saskatchewan we're all — I have a bit of a theory on this — we're all either straight from the farm, straight from the farm or one generation from the farm. And we understand the relationship directly between the work you do and the result. You do good work, the employer makes money, and you then have the ability to go to that employer and ask for what you perceive to be a fairer share. And under The Trade Union Act we are providing the mechanisms to settle, help settle disputes, help resolve disputes, and make it work.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear to me that the trickle-down theory subscribed to by Conservatives and Liberals over the years — the trickle-down theory that has if you feed an elephant enough oats, eventually some birdseed will come out the other end and the birds can get fed — that doesn't work terribly well for birds. It clearly does not work well for people, clearly does not work well for people.

And this Act, along with some of the other . . . for instance The Labour Standards Act, to me, Mr. Speaker, this really highlights the differences between opposition Liberals and Conservatives who are lock-step in this and their understanding of workers, their understanding of the economy, their understanding of life. And it's a philosophical difference.

They have every right to hold that view that this is bad legislation. They have every right in the world to stand up and point out where they think this is flawed. But I think it's incumbent on us all to understand the differences of understanding. Who is it that is standing up for, in addition to the working women and working men, the working people of Saskatchewan, but also trying to make that relationship work in a better manner? Who is it? It's this government.

We are doing that. We've done good things in the past in labour relations, in occupational health and safety, and in The Trade Union Act and other labour legislations in the past. This is the fourth major piece of labour legislation introduced by this government. It's one that I'm very proud of, as with other labour legislation that we have introduced, Mr. Speaker.

The only minor regret I have in this Trade Union Act is that it's introduced in 1994 and wasn't in 1993. Now that is history and there is no way that I'm going to make a big thing of that.

I'm very, very proud. The Minister of Labour, the broad consultation he has done throughout the trade union community, working community, with the business community, the thought that has been put into this Trade Union Act is something that is just phenomenal.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to end my comments. But I want to end by saying again how very proud I am of

this Trade Union Act, this fourth star in our labour legislation; how very proud I am of the Minister of Labour for doing so; how very proud I am of organized trade unions for their lobbying efforts, their discussion, their input. I think it's a wonderful effort all the way around.

I recognize that mine is not the last word on this issue and that there are still a great many naysayers out there. But the goal for us all is to achieve a set of rules that are even-handed, that are workable for, in this case, both parties, and that will allow for some years of fairness to working people, of fairness to business, and of labour rest.

Mr. Speaker, I will take my place now, having said my piece on this Trade Union Act. I will of course be supporting this Act at every turn. I thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a few very brief comments I want to make about this Act.

In some countries where there has been a long tradition of industrial peace, they quite readily accept the notion that people should have the right to organize. Because it's only through organized discussions between employers and employees that people are able to discuss issues of common concern in the economy, matters of productivity, matters of the particular economic health of a particular business.

When there is an organized workplace, there becomes a forum for those discussions and a forum in which the workers don't have to feel necessarily victimized by changes in the economy, but can take an active role in positive response and positive adjustment to the economy.

This has not always been the case. But I think we see a lot of examples now in Canada where employees are saying, rather than let a workplace go out of business or rather than let a particular industry go out of business, they make the decision to instead make some voluntary changes in their contracts. And I think that creates a much more positive environment for those kinds of changes than if one group simply imposes them on another group.

We do have in the Canadian Constitution clauses that guarantee freedom of association. It's very difficult to have freedom of association unless you have a balance of power in the relationships within that association. So another thing that a trade union Act does is it helps balance out those relationships of power within the economy so that freedom of association can in fact be free and be true to that principle.

So I really didn't have too much to add to this debate but those kind of two key principles, of the very positive role that a good structured relationship between employee and employers can bring to the workplace and to the economy, as well as the notice

of the benefits of free association. I think these are two principles that are very fundamental to this Act. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was interesting, as I enter the debate today, to listen to some of the comments made previously in the Assembly this morning. And I think I would like to pick up where the member from Regina Albert North left off when he was talking about the consultation process that went into building this wonderful Trade Union Act that we're discussing this morning, and about how people all over the province had bought into the process.

In today's paper there's a nice list, Mr. Speaker, of the folks that said no, I don't think I've bought into the process at all; we think that there's a great deal of trouble with what we have before us in this Assembly.

And I would just remind the member that the Saskatchewan Chamber, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business have been joined today by the Saskatchewan home builders, the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association. You can put the Saskatchewan Mining Association on that, the Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association. It's to the point, Mr. Speaker, where just about everybody that employs somebody in the province of Saskatchewan says that the government hasn't done their job.

And when you tack on the public sector, Mr. Speaker, as we have seen already with The Labour Standards Act, where SUMA and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) and just about the entire public sector — I believe the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) had a few choice comments for the minister also — are saying: we don't like this process, because quite frankly, nobody's talked to us. Here we are; we supposedly have had 16 months of consultation in the province of Saskatchewan for everybody that employs somebody, and they're all saying no, nobody bothered to talk to us.

The minister would come out and he would give us a dissertation about ancient history, about labour law in Britain in the last century and about labour law in the United States in the 1930s. And as I reminded the member from Regina Albert North there, they should have dragged him along to give us the gospel according to that member for 1972, because he seems to have that down pretty pat.

But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we're in 1994 and there's a whole lot of things going on in the world that are different today than they were even 20 years ago. And the folks, the good folks that are saying we haven't been properly consulted with here; the folks that pay the pay cheques, take the deductions on behalf of everybody; the folks that employ most of the workers in the province of Saskatchewan, are saying

no, we haven't been consulted with. We need time. We need to sit down with this government and explain the facts of life to them. That's what's before us today, Mr. Speaker.

(1230)

You hear the member talk about how this is going to be so good for the economy and the workers in our economy. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have repeatedly asked the minister — we've repeatedly asked the Premier — to show us where one person is going to drop off those welfare rolls of over 81,000 because of these two Acts, one of them.

The 12,000 jobs that have disappeared in this province, Mr. Speaker, since these people came to power in October of 1991 — 12,000 of them gone, poof — is one of those jobs going to come back because of these two pieces of legislation? And particularly given what we are seeing in the amendments of The Trade Union Act and the powers that the minister and his friends in cabinet are going to bestow upon the Labour Relations Board, can they show us where there is one new job?

And you know what? Every time that question has been asked, Mr. Speaker, the minister dekes and dives and comes up with some other excuse of why he doesn't have to answer that question.

Mr. Speaker, those are pretty fundamental questions for the folks out there that are on UI (Unemployment Insurance), that are on the welfare rolls, or had to run off to Alberta or British Columbia or somewhere else in order to get a job. Those are fundamental questions.

The member from Albert North also talks about how my children someday might like the protection of The Trade Union Act. Well, Mr. Speaker, my children someday might like the prospect of a job in their own province. I'd like to get them employed as gainful taxpayers before I really start worrying about some of the other issues in front of them. They've got to get the first job. And if you don't have job creation, if everybody has run out of this province because of the economic climate these people create, then there isn't a chance, Mr. Speaker, that my children are going to stay here, because there will be no jobs for them.

So the question begs, Mr. Speaker, the *Partnership for Renewal* — the *Partnership for Renewal*. How many times do we ask or do we hear the minister from Elphinstone, the Premier, the twin ministers of Finance, tell us about the *Partnership for Renewal* and how that is going to rebuild the Saskatchewan economy and employ people?

Now, Mr. Speaker, how in the world do they square these two pieces of legislation with that? Because everything that is in the *Partnership for Renewal*, the NDP's own document, government document, talks about value added; it talks about processing; it talks about all of these new initiatives; talks about the red meat sector. I mean we've got the Agriculture minister with his own little game plan there called Ag 2000.

Mr. Speaker, none of those things will square with what the Minister of Labour is bringing forward in this province, because all of those things are predicated on trade, on free trade, on provincial barriers dropping; that the flow of goods and services and people back and forth into this new reality of the 21st century will help out the province of Saskatchewan. It's all written there in their own document.

And instead we've got the Minister of Labour here, after 16 months of we're-not-sure-what, bringing forward a couple of Bills that take Saskatchewan out of the mix entirely. That take this jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker, out of the western Canadian context and the North American context and change the rules significantly enough that we will not see one investment dollar, I predict, Mr. Speaker, because of what's going on. There isn't a company in their right mind is going to come into this jurisdiction with a Labour Relations Board that has the kind of power that the minister is proposing to this House.

I mean if you want to take this to the extreme, Mr. Speaker, as I understand the legislation, and the minister can correct me if he's wrong, but in the last year of their term — and these are politically appointed bureaucrats, Mr. Speaker — in the last year of their term, they could appoint the now-distinguished president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour to the chairmanship of that committee.

I'm just using hypothetical circumstances here, Mr. Speaker, but say they wanted to take the now-president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and appoint that individual to the chairmanship of the board. That particular position, Mr. Speaker, is then filled for the next five years, the next five years. So even if these people are thrown out of office — which I predict they will be in the next general election in this province — they get themselves turfed out of office so the next government, Mr. Speaker, has to live with that individual and the pronouncements of that individual over the entire term of their government.

So it amazes me, Mr. Speaker, that this supposedly new, reformed bunch of social democrats over here, these new-found democrats as they liked to call themselves in opposition, would bring in labour legislation that absolutely tied the hands of anyone else in a rapidly changing economy, in a rapidly changing world, with the most Draconian rule ever presented in this province, vis-a-vis the Labour Relations Board.

And I ask that question then very sincerely, Mr. Speaker, to them, is that 81,000-plus on welfare, those 12,000 disappeared jobs, the people on UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) and the young people who flee this province on a daily basis, why should they have any confidence? Why should they have any confidence in this government? They say one thing when they want someone to listen on one side and they do something on the other.

And the minister's absolutely right. He's got a pendulum going and the old pendulum swings over and it pays off a few political debts and then it comes swinging back and it just wipes out a whole bunch of people. That's what it does, Mr. Speaker. It's a good analogy. It's a good analogy. It just swings right back over and it just says, you don't have a hope of economic recovery in this province because no one in their right mind is going to invest in a jurisdiction that is far more expensive than all those around them.

It's simple, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day you still have to generate a profit if you're going to treat your employees and your shareholders, your potential investors, properly.

A healthy financial company, Mr. Speaker, has got far more ability to be a good employer than a company that is going broke, a company that can't pay its bills; a company, Mr. Speaker, that has to look at other jurisdictions in order to survive. It's very simple.

My colleague from Moosomin this morning pointed out a number of areas to the minister. And these are real concerns — they're not made-up concerns, they're not something that people are pulling out of the air.

I mean there's no way that the Saskatchewan Home Builders' Association, which is primarily small, non-union companies, would even get into this fray if they don't see the damage that is done to the Saskatchewan economy, which is only beginning to recover in a small way, Mr. Speaker, from the national recession that Canada's been in, because of the strength that we're seeing south of the 49th parallel. There's no way they would have gotten into the fray.

The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, it was only two and a half short years ago, Mr. Speaker, that many people in the restaurant business in this province were happily laying petitions against harmonization of the PST (provincial sales tax) and the GST (goods and services tax) on their counters for their customers to sign so that these people, in their narrow political drive for power in this province, could benefit.

Today, Mr. Speaker, they speak out loudly against this minister and this government because of the damage that will be done to the food industry and to the tourism industry in this province. And they are organizing and standing shoulder to shoulder, Mr. Speaker, because of the betrayal, the broken promises that these people made, while in opposition, to them, and what would happen in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, they don't want their employees added to that 81,000-plus welfare role. They don't want their employees and the jobs that go with them added to that minus 12,000 jobs that have disappeared in this province since 1991. And they don't want their employees, Mr. Speaker, added to the UIC rolls of this country.

And, Mr. Speaker, the employees that they still have at the end of the day don't want anything to do with the \$2,600 in extra taxation which these people have levied upon them since October of 1991.

Now is there any wonder, Mr. Speaker, that people are coalescing together to fight this legislation? The minister says he consulted. At the end of the consultation process, both of the commissions put together by the minister were either ignored or cherry-picked. Both of these supposedly independent commissions that would study the affected changes were either ignored or cherry-picked.

And the minister in his second reading speech very carefully chose what he wished from the Ish commission and what was rejected. And it was the same with Priel and that report, Mr. Speaker.

So at the end of the day one only has to surmise that this whole exercise is tied to some type of political agenda. Otherwise the fact that no one could come forward with a unanimous recommendation to this government would have been recognized and the process would have been started again. If the recommendations that had come forward had been truly listened to, Mr. Speaker, this legislation wouldn't be here because obviously the consensus-building process in this province hadn't occurred — hadn't occurred.

Mr. Speaker, people in this province, the declining tax base of this province, are becoming fearful. They are fearful of their ability to contribute enough to this government's insatiable appetite for revenue and at the same time keep their home fires burning.

Mr. Speaker, when I listened on television the other night to the committee member on the GST committee from Ottawa saying, I don't understand why people in the streets of this province are not in open revolt, it made me really understand the opposition being brought forward by various groups and organizations to this government and this legislation.

I mean others outside our province recognize the load that people are under here. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? Saskatchewan people being what they are, they're tough, they're resilient. The member from Regina Albert North and I agree on a few things there, that these Saskatchewan people we represent in this Chamber are good, hard-working, honest citizens.

But the fact that they have shouldered the burden to this point without a lot of whining and complaining, Mr. Speaker, is a tribute to them. It has nothing to do with this government. It's a tribute to the folks who shoulder the load. It has nothing to do with these people. These people just add the burden every time they come into this House. First it was agriculture and farmers, Mr. Speaker, then it was health care workers, and now we're into the general employed population of the province.

Mr. Speaker, there's no reason for anyone belonging to the chamber or the Federation of Independent Business or the home builders or the restaurant and food service association or the mining association or PEBA (Public Employees Benefits Agency) or anybody else to employ anybody at some point in time. Why would you work 18 hours a day, as some people do that own businesses, why would you go through all of that, given the mounting load that's being placed upon them in every sector, and then continue to do that with these two pieces of legislation coming down on your head? Why would you do that?

(1245)

It doesn't make any sense sometimes, Mr. Speaker, to work and work and work if at the end of the day a politically appointed board sitting over here can say, your place of business, your workplace, is now certified, and there hasn't even been a democratically held vote. I mean at some place, Mr. Speaker, there has to be some basic democracy in this whole business. Fifty per cent plus one is how we elect just about everything we do in our lives in this province, Mr. Speaker, and it is a secret ballot held in a neutral place, supervised by neutral people. That is the premiss of our democratic system.

Now if the minister had come forward with that in his proposal, no one would have complained, Mr. Speaker. Because then the power of this politically appointed bureaucratic organization called the Labour Relations Board at least would have been balanced by the democratic right of individuals to exercise that right, in a secret ballot, in a neutral place, supervised by neutral people.

But that's not the case, Mr. Speaker. This board or body who are going to have ultimate authority over people's lives for up to five years, are going to be able to certify, decertify, play with the lives of people and taxpayers in this province as we've never seen before. And the minister says the pendulum has to swing that way. Mr. Speaker, that's bunk, absolute bunk.

Mr. Speaker, I can't believe that there is a workplace in this province that would not appreciate that opportunity. I know some people in the union leadership, Mr. Speaker, who don't appreciate that opportunity because it might affect their job. But I for the life of me, and the folks that I know and I represent in my constituency, I know that they understand 50 per cent plus one, Mr. Speaker. I know they understand that fundamental principle. And I cannot understand why this bunch of new-found democrats that are now in government would not want to understand that principle.

We are a changing society, Mr. Speaker. There are global issues brought into our homes every night at 6 o'clock, in the news. The world around us changes. And that's not to say, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of those things are particularly nice or things that we should adopt. But the fact is that our workplace and our population is changing. They're more educated, they have had more disposable income by and large, and

they have had more free time on their hands than ever before in our history.

And, Mr. Speaker, it means that you have to change with those times. You maintain some basic principles, but you have to change with those times. And I cannot understand a government that faces a very difficult financial situation — I give them that, a very difficult financial situation — wanting to put impediments in the place of resolving that situation.

The problem with New Democrats is on one hand they are going to make the leap, but then we have the member from Regina Albert North getting up and reminding us about that darker side that resists change in that political party.

It makes me think of the way that that political party selects leaders, Mr. Speaker, and all the special interest groups that get guaranteed allotments of voting delegates at conventions. And then I understand why there's this reluctance for 50 per cent plus one voting privileges by people in a workplace in neutral jurisdictions supervised by neutral people, because it doesn't even exist in the New Democratic Party in the way they choose their delegates for leadership selection.

Mr. Speaker, this list of people that I have read out this morning in organizations are saying to the government, you've got another chance. There isn't one of them that hasn't agreed to come back and sit down. Not one of these organizations isn't willing to sit down with the minister and with cabinet, with whoever, and work toward change.

I'm amazed that people haven't drawn a line in the sand and just said, to heck with it. I really am, Mr. Speaker. I mean, that was always the approach that these people advocated in opposition. They were constantly running around this province drawing lines in the sand and encouraging people to be disobedient and to — how do they say? — make the place ungovernable. You know, the more rabble-rousers you could drag out at a one given time was seen as a credence of your political capability. They constantly encouraged that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the organizations I've talked about don't act that way. They know there's a process and they're willing to sit down, and time after time they've said to these people, why don't you pull this stuff off the agenda, at least until the fall session. Until we honestly can sit down and see how it fits in with the *Partnership for Renewal*. How we see it fits in with Ag 2000. How we see it fit in with SOC (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation). How we see it fit in with SAHO and the changes that are occurring in the health sector. How we see it fit in with contracting out, which is going to be a big issue in the health care sector. All of these issues are on the table and the minister has not given us one answer — not one.

We asked him to table the regulations. Oh no, I can't do that. He says, pass the Bill first and then we'll design the regulations. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's

asking to get drifted — one high, hard, one right in the left ear. That's what the minister is asking people to do. Because at the end of the day, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we still will have this almighty Labour Relations Board sitting there adjudicating the process.

Mr. Speaker, if the government believes for one minute that it's all rosy out there, then they'd better go back to the drawing board and listen again.

Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of comments to make on behalf of Saskatchewan people. And I believe the minister and his government as well as members of the opposition, who have to be cognizant of both sides in this argument, should take the opportunity over the weekend and go back and listen to what people are saying. They should listen to what people are saying, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I would beg leave to adjourn the debate, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:52 p.m.