

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I have the honour of presenting petitions on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens. Mr. Speaker, I'll just read out the prayer:

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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I have citizens from the communities of Stockholm; Saltcoats, Saskatchewan; Yorkton, Saskatchewan. The community of Bangor, the community of MacNutt, Bredenbury, Langenburg, Esterhazy, Neudorf — lots of people down in the east side of the province, Mr. Speaker, who would like this situation rectified. And I do present them on their behalf today.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too have petitioners who are here petitioning today on behalf of themselves in regard to underground tanks and their removal. They come from Eastend, Climax, Shaunavon, Ceylon, Frontier, Dollard, different areas in the south-west. And I want to, on their behalf, provide these to the Assembly here today.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions on the same subject that I will lay on the Table on behalf of the citizens of this province, and these particular individuals happen to come mostly from Yorkton, Saltcoats, Bredenbury, Langenburg, Churchbridge, and Esterhazy and basically the south-east part of the province, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure to lay these on the Table at this time. Thank you.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have some names of these petitioners to lay on the Table concerning the underground storage tanks in the province of Saskatchewan. The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are mostly from Kamsack, Togo, Veregin on this page. This next page is mostly Yorkton, Kamsack, Togo, Saskatchewan; yes, Mr. Speaker, that's mostly Veregin and Kamsack. And also the next page is all Kamsack, Veregin, Togo. And now on this page here is mostly Grenfell. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have today several pages of a petition also referring to the problems expressed about the storage tanks that my colleagues have already read the prayer for. These petitions come from Saskatoon, Veregin, Kamsack, and mostly from Grenfell. And I'm happy to present them and lay them on the Table today on behalf of these people.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions to present today dealing with the underground storage tank issue. These petitions come from the areas of Churchbridge, Bredenbury, Saltcoats, Mr. Speaker, Atwater, along the eastern border of Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present these now.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have been receiving petitions from all across the province on the same issue, that is the underground storage tanks issue. And as the prayer has been read, I won't read the prayer.

These come from pretty well across the province — Calder — and we even have one from Stornoway, Mr. Speaker. But I guess there is a town called Stornoway, and MacNutt, Langenburg, Kamsack, again Calder. Quite a diverse . . . across the province. I'd like to lay these on the Table on behalf of those people.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a number of petitions I'd like to lay on the Table. The petitions are signed by individuals from the communities of Esterhazy, Yorkton, Moosomin, Estevan, Melville and Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. I so present them to the House.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well have petitions dealing with the underground storage tank issue and the concern that people have surrounding that. The petitioners come from Langenburg, Saltcoats, Saskatoon, Esterhazy, Churchbridge, Rocanville, Grayson and other areas of Saskatchewan. I'm pleased to be able to present them on their behalf this afternoon.

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. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the House, 20 grade 3 and 4 students from the Rhein School, who are seated up in the east side of your

gallery, Mr. Speaker. And accompanying the students here today is their teacher, Ms. Donna Dickie; their chaperon, Ms. Kyba; and the bus driver, Mr. Erhardt.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have the pleasure of meeting with this group on the stairs at 2:20 for a photo; then after that into room 218 for some refreshments. And I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, they'll have a number of questions for me which I'll be happy to handle at that time.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all the members in the House to join with me in offering these students a very warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kluz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, 19 grade 8 students from the Invermay School, which are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, on the west side. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Ms. Angeline Musckaluk, and bus driver, Joe Cherewyk. I will be meeting with them after question period for a photo and a question period.

And I would like all members of this Assembly to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the legislature, a group of visitors who have joined us in the west gallery today. They're members of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Council who are having a meeting in the building today.

The council will advise the minister and Saskatchewan Health on policies and programs for people with alcohol and drug abuse problems. This includes appropriate treatment, early intervention, prevention, and health promotion. They were selected from more than 80 nominees submitted by various organizations working in the addictions field.

Both Ministers Simard and Calvert are meeting with nurses today, so they've asked me to introduce the members of the council and if you would help me out by standing and being recognized when I call your name.

Reverend Marg McKechney is the chairperson of the council. Doug Abrosimoff from Lashburn; Angus Campbell from Saskatoon; one member, Erika Cancino is not here today; Dr. Ken Crowe from Melfort; Jack Greening from Christopher Lake; Allan Morin from Meadow Lake; Christopher Mackintosh from Henribourg; Sheri McConnell from Saskatoon; Dr. Virginia McGowan from Saskatoon; Margaret Rainville, Creighton; and Don Stevenson from Regina.

Could you please join me in welcoming the council members today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join my colleague today and have the members of the Assembly welcome Doug Abrosimoff from Lashburn. Doug is a well-respected, well-known high school principal in our area and an excellent choice on the council.

So I'd like you to join me in welcoming Doug.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to also join with my colleagues in welcoming the members of the advisory council and in particular I'd like to welcome Angus Campbell to the legislature this afternoon.

Mr. Campbell spent many years working for SADAC (Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission) in the province of Saskatchewan. He also is the author of a book that documents the history of public work in this province when it comes to drug and alcohol addiction. I am pleased to see Angus has been appointed to the advisory council because he has a wealth of knowledge and history on this problem in the province. So welcome, Angus.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Not to be outdone by any of my colleagues, I certainly want to join as well in welcoming the advisory council.

I have two individuals up there that I recognize — the one from Meadow Lake, Mr. Morin, and certainly also Chris Mackintosh who was originally from Meadow Lake and now has moved away. So I welcome specifically both of you. Thank you very much. I hope you enjoy the proceedings here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome a member from my constituency, Rev. Margaret McKechney, who's pastor of St. Paul's United Church in the Sutherland constituency and a well-known worker in the community there in Saskatoon. Welcome, Margaret.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Lloydminster Rodeo

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to inform the Assembly that this weekend, April 22 to 24, the Lloydminster rodeo will be taking place. This will mark the 22nd year that this great event sponsored by the Kinsmen will come to Lloydminster.

The Lloydminster rodeo is a pro rodeo, which means spectators will see some of the best and brightest stars of the arena. Contestants have been known to come to

this event from all over Canada and the United States. We are expecting a great time at the Lloyd civic centre and the weather conditions won't matter because this is an indoor rodeo.

This event has been widely advertised throughout the area so a large turnout is expected since this is the only rodeo held in the area.

Proceeds from the weekend will be divided among various community projects on both sides of the border. The Lloydminster rodeo is also a time in which our community has a chance to get together. The pride and spirit we have in our region will show through this weekend.

I would like to wish all the volunteers, workers, participants, and spectators good luck and hope all have as much fun as in years past.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of those who enjoy the action of rodeo and the enjoyment of a community get-together to come up to Lloydminster this weekend. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

International Special Librarians Day

Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, we are effective in our deliberations in direct proportion, I think, to the accuracy of information that is provided to us. I want to take a minute today to recognize the hard work of the people in our Legislative Library.

Today is International Special Librarians Day. A special librarian, as the term suggests, is one who provides focused working information to a specialized clientele. This includes legislative librarians.

The theme this year is "building a better world with information". Our librarians are doing their part. They're doing research for us quickly and accurately.

The special librarians who do such an outstanding job for us, Mr. Speaker, do it for each member of this Assembly and for our staffs, and they do it with total objectivity. They are non-partisan. As their mission statement says, they put knowledge to work for the benefit of the general public.

Mr. Speaker, our Legislative Library is one of the most striking sections of this magnificent building, and the librarians and staff who work there uphold the library's tradition of excellent service.

I ask members to join with me in thanking Marian Powell and her staff on this one day for the work that they do for us throughout the whole year. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

North Dakota Senator Conrad

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to respond to the serious threats that were

made yesterday by a Democratic senator from North Dakota who indicated he would like to retarget 300 Minutemen missiles at Canada.

First of all, I have a warning for Senator Conrad. As some of you may know, Mr. Speaker, we actually have an American citizen working as a researcher in our opposition caucus office. And we intend to hold her, Mr. Speaker, as a human shield until this nuclear threat is withdrawn.

Secondly, I note that the article in today's paper described Senator Conrad as a "frustrated North Dakota senator". And I think I can understand some of the senator's frustrations.

It must be frustrating to watch the World Series trophy wind up north of the border for two consecutive years, Mr. Speaker. It must be frustrating to watch Canada, with one-tenth of the population of the U.S. (United States of America), win just as many medals in the winter Olympics, Mr. Speaker. It must be frustrating for an American senator to see Canada's superior durum wheat industry outproducing and outmarketing American farmers, Mr. Speaker.

And it must be particularly galling for the senator to realize that most of this wheat production takes place in a socialist-run province, proving that there is something even the members opposite can't screw up, Mr. Speaker.

And in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to say to Senator Conrad, if North Dakota dedicated a few more of its silos to agricultural production and a few less to housing nuclear missiles, they might not have a problem keeping up with Saskatchewan farmers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order.

SRC Aquatic Study

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to announce a project that is to take place at the Saskatchewan Research Council in Saskatoon — a project with a title that defies comprehension, but a project of potentially great benefit to the Saskatchewan mining industry, and more importantly to the northern Saskatchewan environment.

The SRC (Saskatchewan Research Council) has been awarded a \$540,000 contract by Environment Canada for study on, and I quote: the development of aquatic plant bioassays for rapid screening and interpretive risk assessments of metal mining waste waters, end quote. I won't repeat that.

In laypersons' terms what this means, I think, is that this project will study ways to use water plants as testing tools in streams that may be affected by metal mining liquid wastes. This way problems can be pinpointed and dealt with quickly, thus limiting environmental damage and also reducing costs to the company. This technology will have application to

base minerals, gold, and uranium mines.

This study is being undertaken with the collaborative support of agencies in the U.S.A. and Europe. And, Mr. Speaker, this study will further enhance the SRC's strong reputation as a body which combines its own applied research with that of universities, government and industry.

I congratulate Dr. Hans Peterson of the Research Council and Dr. Ming Huang of the University of Saskatchewan, who will lead the research team.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Woodlands Enterprises Contract

Mr. Langford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to tell the Assembly about some good news in my constituency. A few weeks ago Weyerhaeuser announced it was cancelling its contracts with Woodlands Enterprises for tree harvesting. This meant that as many as 86 jobs would be lost there.

This was a tough situation for us to face. That's why we met with some of the employees and encouraged them to put in a proposal to take over the contract. Today Weyerhaeuser announced that one of the two proposals was accepted. As such, many of these employees will be able to go back to work.

While the second employee proposal was not accepted, Weyerhaeuser has agreed to sign a contract with a new native-owned company in the region to do tree harvesting. And it will be expanding its allocation to some of its existing contracts.

I want to congratulate the employees on their initiatives and note my pleasure that Weyerhaeuser saw the merits of the proposal.

Mr. Speaker, while this announcement today is not all good news, it is a good start to getting people back to work and helping native people find work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Safari '94

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past months we've heard a great deal about the future of communications in Canada. This week we have experienced firsthand some exciting new initiatives related to unique learning opportunities made available for Saskatchewan people.

As a result of a project brought together by Saskatchewan Communications Network and the Saskatchewan Science Centre, with sponsorship from Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment, and SaskTel, Saskatchewan students have been linked with students from around the world in an exciting live, interactive program known as Safari 1994.

This program, originating from Barkley Sound off the coast of British Columbia, has taken students and other viewers deep beneath the seas and encouraged them to focus on discussions related to the environment and natural life of that area.

I was pleased to see Saskatchewan student Barrett Rankin from Mildred Central School at the originating site of Barkley Sound. Undoubtedly he will be bringing back some incredible stories to share with his classmates.

SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network Corporation) also took the opportunity this week to announce that it would link the Saskatchewan Science Centre's main floor theatre as a receiving site for its training network. This site will provide greater public access to satellite-delivered sessions, expand SCN's potential for major satellite conference clients, and increase the Science Centre's ability to bring in a greater variety of satellite programming. SCN's training network now links more than 100 classrooms province-wide.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the partnerships SCN is building in our Saskatchewan way, demonstrating clearly how organizations can work together toward mutual solutions of increasing information access for all our residents.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Gambling Addiction

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I direct my first set of questions to the minister responsible for liquor and gambling. Mr. Minister, prior to question period I provided you with a briefing note about an individual with a serious gambling addiction problem. And I have no desire to get into the particulars of this case other than to say that it illustrates the serious problem that your video slot machines are creating.

Gambling addiction has created a major problem for this individual, his wife, his children, his employer. It has cost him thousands of dollars and ultimately it cost him his job. It is also worth noting that he never gambled, never gambled before your machines came to town.

Mr. Minister, as of today your government is providing no help for this person or the hundreds of other Saskatchewan people who may already be addicted to your slot machines. Why the delay, Mr. Minister? Why is there no help for this person and his family to turn to?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to the member by saying that in fact there is a 1-800 number that is available for people who are having problems. This 1-800 number is an interim

number being used by the department whereby people will be directed to services that are available in the community.

In addition to that, there are four people presently being trained who will occupy and work with the new 1-800 number as soon as it comes into effect during the upcoming fiscal year, as we had indicated and had promised earlier on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — I don't know why I'm dealing with you, but I guess I'll have to direct my questions to you, Mr. Minister. That is simply not good enough. On February 21, I asked the real minister — that's two months ago today — I asked that minister the same question. I asked, where is that 800 number and the counselling services that he had promised? I was told in no uncertain terms, as I was just told again today, that that 800 number for counselling services is in place. And, Mr. Minister, that simply is not true — not true.

And there's still not a place a person can call to get help with a serious gambling problem — addiction. Mr. Minister, why the big rush to set your slot machines up in every corner of the province, and why the big . . . even bigger delay in responding to the serious gambling problems that those machines are creating?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To answer the question from the member, I want to indicate to him that there is an existing number, the SADAC number, that he is well aware of. And I also want to indicate that the 1-800 number will be in place in early May where there will be a window for people who feel they have a problem with respect to gaming addiction, where they can reach counselling. We are at the present time training counsellors to deal specifically with people who have a gambling addiction. These services will be available, sir, to the people of Saskatchewan.

And I want to say that for the first time in Saskatchewan there has been a government who recognizes, because of the fact that gambling is around this province, that there is a need to create programs and put programs together. And I want to remind you, sir, that you were part of the government that expanded bingo gambling, as an example, from 1982, where there was \$4 million spent to over a hundred million dollars when we took power in 1991, and did nothing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to notice that I finally got a full flush. It took me two days to flush the real minister out, but here he is.

Now, Mr. Minister, what your House Leader just told me about the 800 number and that you seem to be so

fond of just doesn't work, because we put it to a test yesterday. Our office tried calling that 800 number that you gave me back in February — February 23 I believe you gave me that, or was it February 13. We were told that counselling services are not yet available for people with gambling addiction problems. That's what we were told yesterday when we phoned that 800 number — counselling services are not yet available. So we asked, well is there a brochure or something that you can send us? They said no, the government has not yet put together a brochure.

Mr. Minister, your government has spent millions of dollars and thousands of person-hours installing these machines all over Saskatchewan. You're spending hundreds of thousand dollars to send a health committee touring the province to talk to people about your wellness. And you don't even have a brochure that you can send to a gambling addict, let alone, let alone providing them with adequate counselling, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, where are your priorities? Why is it taking so long for you to set up a system of help for those people that are becoming addicted to your gambling slot machines?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated to the member earlier on, and I don't know if he's phoned the wrong number or not, but there is a toll free number. It's 1-800-667-7560, and you can get that from *Hansard* or I'll pass it across to you, where people can access information and where they can access self-help and counselling services. And I want to say that part of that process is that callers may be transferred to the manager of Myers recovery centre in Regina who will connect callers to local alcohol and drug and mental health counsellors.

But let me say to the member and let me say one more time, as bingo gambling expanded in this province, you did nothing. Four million dollars to over a hundred million dollars, and now all of a sudden this new-found, sanctimonious attitude surfaces in this legislature. I say to the member from Rosthern, have a look at what you did when you were in power, and have a look at the fact you did nothing to address this fact. And this government has committed real dollars and there are real programs to help people in this province, and it will be a process that will be adequate to serve the needs of those few people who become problem gamblers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I would suggest those real dollars that you're talking about is phoney money, just like the play money that we were talking about in this House yesterday. When we phoned that line, that line had absolutely nothing to offer. In fact, the individual didn't even ask for a name, made no offer of any counselling or referrals. Absolutely nothing. Nothing,

Mr. Minister. And you say . . . and I think the reason you're doing that is because you do not want to admit, you do not want to admit the problem of gaming addiction.

Mr. Minister, I have a quote here from Les Landry, the founder of the gambling addiction organization in Manitoba. And he says, and I quote:

I believe the governments of the day are addicted (the governments of the day are addicted) and the worst symptom of addiction is denial.

Mr. Minister, your slot machines are creating a serious problem all over the province. And I think you are right now in a stage of denial. Why don't you pull your head out of the sand, Mr. Minister, and admit this? Will you recognize that your NDP (New Democratic Party) slot machines are hurting many Saskatchewan families, and then start dealing with the problem instead of pretending that it does not exist?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me say to the member opposite, given the display of competence, or incompetence, that was exhibited during the years of your government, I would find it not impossible to believe that you couldn't even dial the right phone number or that you would have staff around you who couldn't find the right phone number to help to phone for assistance.

Let me say this, Mr. Speaker: there has been gambling in this province for years and years, casino gambling for decades, bingo gambling for years, which this government expanded unbridled and uncontrolled without any thought for addiction or any thought for helping people who may be in a problem in that area.

So I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I would be more than willing to meet with the member to help him find, through the Department of Health, a source where someone, if he has a person who needs some assistance, can receive assistance. He knows full well that during the time when he was government the Department of Health has sent people who have been addicted to gambling for treatment, as has this government in the past.

So, Mr. Speaker, I say, instead of the member from Rosthern grandstanding, if he has a case that needs to be dealt with, I'm more than willing to meet with him to help find a solution.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

No-fault Insurance

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Mr. Minister, during my drive to the legislature this morning I heard a radio ad that nearly caused an accident. Apparently the minister of SGI has purchased an extensive

advertising campaign extolling the benefits of the new, no-fault insurance plan.

Mr. Minister, you have very limited duties in cabinet, so I would hope that you could pass on this information. Very simply, how much money has your government spent on this promotional campaign?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the minister of SGI, I'll take notice of the issue that has been raised as to the cost of the advertising.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the minister isn't here, I wonder if the minister could explain to us the rosy picture painted for no-fault insurance by the ad. It tells people that the benefits paid out will increase and that SGI premiums will not increase for 1994. And that's insurance utopia.

Mr. Minister, can you tell this Assembly if there will be an ad informing the general public of the disadvantages in no-fault insurance? For instance, will there be an ad that tells people that only those who make more than \$50,000 a year will be able to sue the government for additional benefits?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the member would be opposed to no-fault insurance. His colleagues from Manitoba, the Conservative government of Mr. Gary Filmon, talks long and loud about the advantages of no-fault insurance.

As to the debate about the new Bill and the changes to the insurance of SGI and the insurance that will be provided, there'll be ample opportunity for all of us to become involved in the debate and the discussion. And I want to say to you that these changes which will help families involved in accidents, in terms of rehabilitation and helping meet their needs financially, it's hard to believe that that member would be opposed to these changes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister mentions debate. Perhaps the minister responsible will be prepared to debate the president of Saskatchewan bar association on this issue.

Mr. Minister, perhaps the real name for this insurance should be it's-not-my-fault insurance.

Mr. Minister, your government and especially your Premier, love to pretend that they are defenders of the little guy. Well the little guy here plainly loses. Your insurance plan allows the president of SaskPower to sue for additional losses, while the president's secretary is out of luck — assuming that she doesn't make \$50,000 a year. She has to take what you give her and that's the end of it.

I realize that your government has a great fear that the public may take you to court; that you don't allow them to have access to the courts. You have consistently taken away the fundamental right of

redress in the court, time and time again. And why this discrepancy? Why not allow everyone to have their day in court?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, here again the member attempts to mislead on the issue of what and what won't be included in the new Act. I say again, we will be getting into the debate here in the House on this Bill in the very near future.

But, Mr. Speaker, what's ironic in the discussion that's going on here today about SGI is the fact that the members on the front benches of the Conservative caucus, while they were in government, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to do what? — to privatize SGI, which would have done away with the company. Now they're saying . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Of course it's true. We can produce the documents that will show you were actively considering the privatization of SGI.

Now when some parts are being amended in order to make a stronger insurance company and maintain a solid base for the company and also give two years with no increase, those members bleat about the fact that we would be making changes to improve the status of insurance for ordinary Saskatchewan citizens.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I have to ask you: what is so special about you that you can be protected from additional loss of incomes as a cabinet minister, a minister of the Crown, when your back-benchers aren't offered that same protection?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Here again I talk about the misrepresentation, but there will be opportunities for the public to exercise the courts when their income is affected over a certain level.

And for economic loss they will be able to use the courts in those certain circumstances. So you're not right, and that's why the debate should go on here in the House and you will be able to ask those kind of questions to the minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Labour Legislation

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Labour this afternoon. Mr. Minister, Saskatchewan has had an enviable labour-employer record. In fact, since 1984 Saskatchewan has been consistently below the national average in the time lost to strikes and lockouts.

And this hardly indicates what one would deem a

labour problem with labour legislation. Mr. Minister, please explain why you believe that changing labour legislation will produce any competitive edge for Saskatchewan people. Will this result in more jobs, more taxpayers and less burden for those suffering from a horrendous tax load in our province?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, the member is partially correct — we have developed a decent labour-management relationship. We most certainly did not have that when the Liberals were in office in the '60s, nor did we have an enviable labour office when the other right-wing party was in office during the '80s. We had a rather sorry record.

The purpose of these amendments is to develop a more cooperative relationship between management and labour. Given the record of both Liberals and Tories in office, one can hardly be expected that you would understand that, but that is what we're attempting to do and we are in the process of succeeding in doing it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I just gave you the statistics since 1984 in terms of labour relations in the province. If Saskatchewan were in the midst of a serious labour crisis, then I think it would make sense to introduce the kinds of labour legislation that we have before us in the Assembly today.

The number of days lost to work stoppages is at an all-time low and it reflects a nationwide spirit of cooperation between both employers and employees to keep work coming and to keep their jobs alive, even if it means concessions for both sides.

The proposed changes to The Trade Union Act will make it virtually impossible for Saskatchewan companies to downsize or to change collective agreements even if those two things . . . one of those two things will save jobs and will protect competitiveness.

So, Mr. Minister, if there is no labour unrest at this time in our province, and it doesn't protect jobs, what problems does this legislation fix?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well given the fact that the hon. member is able to pocket a 37 per cent increase, one can hardly be expected for you to have much empathy for working people.

But the fact is there are some problems out there. Everybody, everybody but the members opposite, acknowledge there are some problems. Not everybody agrees on what we are doing. We are attempting to provide some solutions, but there are some real problems out there and if the member would come off her lofty — and I may say very posh — pedestal provided to her, she might understand that working people have some problems in The Labour Standards Act and we are on the way to resolving them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Minister, you haven't said what problem it is the legislation fixes. That was the question posed to you.

Labour Canada statistics indicate that the average wage settlement in February of 1994 was at its lowest since they began keeping records in 1978. Workers who understand today's realities all throughout the country are willing to take less because they understand the global market and they want to keep their jobs. They understand the necessity for remaining competitive.

Now the assistant chief economist of the Bank of Montreal said yesterday, and I quote:

Canada is outperforming the United States, not only when it comes to inflation, but on limiting wage increases as well. Hopefully this is what will supply us with a continued competitive advantage.

End of quote.

Clauses 10 and 33 of your legislation will virtually eliminate the flexibility to renegotiate contracts even if that will save people's jobs, Mr. Minister. Why are you determined, in the province of Saskatchewan, to buck the entire trend of everything in Canada by legislating a competitive disadvantage for our labour force? That's what you're doing for our labour force. Why are you doing that?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, this is hardly the place to enter into long dissertations about the reasons for this. This has been extensively discussed in the debate on second reading and in the Committee of the Whole, and if the member were ever to deem herself appropriate to come here for those debates you'd have heard it. That is the place for you to discuss this, not in question period. There is more to the Assembly than simply question period.

I want to go on and say to the member opposite that it is a little phoney for members opposite to pocket a 37 per cent pay increase and then say: Mr. Speaker, the economic health of the nation depends upon keeping wages lower. Well I say to Madam Member opposite, austerity, like charity, begins at home or it's as phoney as a \$3 bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — I find it most interesting, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, you do not prevail to stay in here when I'm discussing The Labour Standards Act either.

Mr. Minister, you talk about being concerned about workers. The Saskatoon Health Board just laid off 200 health care people — 200 health care workers in our province. They now have worked out an agreement with employees to take banked overtime on Fridays to

reduce costs, and do you want to know why they did that? So that they could avoid any further lay-offs for people who want jobs.

Now the universities this very week cut back on faculty and staff — we're talking real people. Why? Because of their deficits and because of budget restrictions. But the changes to The Trade Union Act could eliminate contracting out to non-union support services which may be the only way for these people to cope in their available administrations to deal with their restrictions.

Mr. Minister, what have the health boards and the universities told you? What have they told you about the impact that The Trade Union Act will have on their flexibility for dealing with budget realities and the ability to save more jobs?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, those of us who have been in this House as long as I have, thought we heard the faint echoes of the ghost of Ross Thatcher talking just a moment ago when you go into the issues you do.

I say with respect to the member opposite, this is not the '60s. The solution which the Liberal Party used in the '60s is not the solution for the '90s. These are new problems, this is a new government, and we're going to resolve these problems and in the process we're going to build a Saskatchewan which won't just survive in the '90s, it's going to thrive in the '90s — something Liberals have had no experience with.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Welfare Numbers

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the Minister of Finance. Madam Minister, the other day you promised to release a table showing that Saskatchewan, relative to its population, had the lowest number of people on welfare than any province in Canada. We still haven't received that table and I suspect, Madam Minister, that the reason is, it simply isn't true.

Madam Minister, we checked with the Social Services in Alberta and they informed us there are about 131,000 people on welfare in that province — that's about 5 per cent of the population. In Saskatchewan, there are over 81,000 on welfare — that's over 8 per cent of the population.

Madam Minister, why did you mislead this House? And when are you going to start lowering that number instead of trying to produce false figures and cover up your government's dismal performance?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear that the Saskatchewan dependency rate has been the lowest in Canada, but we will give that information after. Now Alberta, the exception is Alberta. The reason the exception is Alberta is

because they have given one-way bus tickets out of Alberta — 2,500 to B.C. (British Columbia) and several coming to Saskatchewan. They're kicking people off assistance, transferring them over to other dependency programs. Take the total dependency rate.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's the same old punitive attitude we see there as we see over with the Liberals. We hear the Prime Minister last night — I hope he was misquoted — the Prime Minister last night, of Canada, is saying that people on assistance can no longer sit home and drink beer, as if they all are. This is a very sad day. This is a very sad day. Mr. Speaker, this is a very sad day when the Prime Minister of Canada accuses people on assistance, in the midst of structural unemployment, of sitting home drinking beer and then says, well they're all not doing this.

Then he talks about enhancing people's dignity at the same time, Mr. Speaker. Then he talks about the provinces baulking. We're willing to go to Ottawa any time. We've had our proposal sitting on Mr. Axworthy's desk for five . . . for two months and we've still not heard when we're going to proceed with those initiatives.

So all I'm saying is we're trying hard to deal with the unemployment rate. Our numbers are . . .

The Speaker: — Order, next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll direct my next question to the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Minister, time and again we've heard you make excuses about federal offloading. The Government of Alberta had to deal with these changes also, but instead of looking for excuses, Mr. Minister, they went looking for solutions. As a result, Mr. Minister, the number of people on welfare has been reduced by 34 per cent in one year. During the same period, the number of people on welfare in Saskatchewan increased by 20 per cent.

Mr. Minister, I ask you: when are you going to start developing solutions instead of excuses? And when is the number of people on welfare in Saskatchewan going to start going down? When are you going to get jobs for these people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the member should think about that. When case-loads are going up across Canada on the average of 51 per cent in the last three years, they go up in Saskatchewan on an average of 33 per cent only, that's the truth; when he talks about one province reducing their case-load and going against that national trend by 20 per cent in one year, what do you think they're doing? They're knocking people off and into Manitoba and Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Be honest about this. They're transferring people over to other dependency programs, to municipalities, subsidizing

businesses, and so on.

We could do that too. We're not doing that. We're trying, through good economic development initiatives, to provide meaningful, long-term jobs, and we want some help from the provincial and federal Liberals. The provincial Liberals were so unconcerned about economic development that they wouldn't participate in the debate last week, the motion last week calling for the federal government to create employment and jobs as the best social safety net program we can provide. They opted out of that.

Now the federal minister is . . . federal Prime Minister is attacking low income people just like you are, which goes to prove that there's no difference between your two parties.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 40

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that **Bill No. 40 — An Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act to provide for Mediation** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments I'd like to make regarding Bill No. 40 before we move it into committee.

As with Bill No. 39, I've had an opportunity to discuss this legislation with department officials prior to its consideration in the House and I appreciate that time and I thank the minister for allowing his officials and giving them the time to come and just to chat with me regarding the legislation.

Mr. Minister, I want to also indicate that the legislation that is before us has been something that has been on my mind for a while. And as I was discussing with my colleagues, one of the things I suggested in light of some of the concerns that were raised with me and have some of the ongoing concerns that are being brought up regarding mediation, it's appropriate I think, Mr. Speaker, that we do have this legislation before us.

The intent of the legislation is to provide mediation services to those couples terminating their legal relationship. I would think, Mr. Speaker, that maybe we should be looking at ways and means and efforts of trying to get couples to sit back and, if you will, cool off and take a serious look at the relationship. Possibly some couples may find that where they feel it more appropriate to terminate a relationship, at the end of

the day they may reconsider and decide to hold that relationship together. However, Mr. Speaker, there are many occasions, no matter what you do, couples have reached a point where they just simply decide that there isn't a lot they can do and decide to part ways.

Now parting of ways I think should be . . . we should be looking at ways in which we can help couples work through the problems of termination and how you divide up assets. And I think that's one of the major problems and major confrontational elements we find in relationships when couples decide to part ways and terminate relationships — how do you divide the assets?

I think many couples are in an emotional state when they decide to part and I think it would be good for us to have this legislation. I look forward to the legislation once it has basically moved through and I would say we probably would be viewing the trial period . . . or the first little while will be a trial period as the justice system reviews the legislation and puts it into practice and sees how it will work.

And I trust, Mr. Speaker, that it will provide an avenue with which couples can separate, if they see that as the only solution, and part on very amiable conditions. I think that if you talk to many couples who have separated and couples who have gone through the process of trying to divide assets, you will find that they have found that legal action is long, expensive, and mentally exhausting. And certainly I believe that this mediation service is modelled on existing mediation programs available through Justice for farm families having trouble with their debt loads and we will be asking more questions about this in committee.

When I talk about the long, tedious process of legal action as well, Mr. Minister, I'm reminded of a . . . I'm not exactly sure, I believe it was a *Reader's Digest* article about this couple that had decided to part ways and they just wrote of the circumstances that they had run into.

The interesting scenario on that case, Mr. Speaker, was that the couple were quite well off and there were considerable assets to divide. The couple had decided at the end of the day when they were going to terminate the relationship and just go through with it, they wanted to do it in a most amiable and understanding manner.

So they sat down at a table and they basically went through the whole process of what they owned and what they had worked with, what they had accumulated together, and then they broke it down and they decided, okay you will have this and I will have this. And they had come to a workable agreement regarding their separation, Mr. Speaker.

The unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker, was that they decided then to go to a lawyer to have this agreement signed and sealed in the presence of a lawyer, so that neither one of them could come back at the other

couple . . . or at the other person.

The interesting part was when they approached the lawyer, the lawyer suggested that each of the partners should have their own lawyer. So they thought, well okay, maybe that's the proper route and we'll each get our own lawyer and we'll come back and we'll go before a judge and we'll have this separation legalized.

Well at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I might add that the couple found out once they got their own lawyers, their own lawyers started giving them information and indicating that either one of them actually could get more if they just demanded more. The result was they ended up in court; they ended up in heated and hated argument and debate.

And at the end of the day, who benefited? It wasn't the couple. They had come to a workable solution, but because of advice from lawyers and through the courts, the legal system and the lawyers got most of the assets and the couple were left with nothing.

Therefore I think, Mr. Speaker, and I trust that this form of mediation will be an avenue that will allow couples to sit down and, in a very comprehensive manner, look at the assets and look at what they've accumulated together; look at what they've built together as a couple, recognize the rights of either partner and the fact that if they're going to part ways, they should do it in the most agreeable way that is possible.

So even though at the end of the day we may find mediation may not work in every circumstance, Mr. Speaker, I think it's appropriate that we are taking this avenue, that this legislation is coming forward; that we are going to give couples this opportunity.

And I think, hand in hand with the mediation process, Mr. Speaker, I think one of the other areas we should take a serious look at and I think . . . and I intend to bring it up with the minister, is that we also give the mediators, whoever they may be, the opportunity to sit down with a couple and go through their case scenario and see if we can't work out a way or come to an agreement with them whereby they might reconsider the separation and decide that maybe, in the long run and in the best interests of all involved, it might be better to continue that relationship rather than separate.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think this is good. We look forward to seeing how it's going to work in society. But at the end of the day, I trust that we're not looking at ways to make it easier for couples to separate, but we should still strive and work towards ways and avenues in which we can give couples an opportunity to deal with people, sit down with people, and see if they can come to an agreement on the differences and maintain a relationship rather than breaking that relationship.

Because, Mr. Speaker, if there's children or family involved, broken homes and broken children, a lot of

hurt people throughout our society, it's something that really affects each and every one of us. And I think we need to work at building homes, building families, building relationships, and building our society rather than tearing it down.

So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to a number of questions that we will raise with the minister regarding this Bill as we proceed in committee.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 39

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that **Bill No. 39 — An Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act to create a Family Law Division and to enact Consequential Amendments arising from the enactment of this Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as with the Bill No. 40, I did have the opportunity as well of discussing this Bill with department officials, and again, I appreciate the time and effort that they gave in relationship to sitting down with me and explaining the intent of the Bill and the process of the Bill.

The Unified Family Court has operated as a pilot project in Saskatoon since 1978. This being the case, there has been ample time to measure its successes and its failures. I believe as well, Mr. Speaker, we found there's been ample time to determine what measures are necessary to enhance the Unified Family Court.

Obviously its successes have been great or we would not be debating the Bill at this time. I think this is a good piece of legislation and that many people across the province will benefit from it.

This legislation will essentially expand the Unified Family Court concept through the remainder of the province. According to the minister, there will be six judges assigned to the family law division created within the Court of Queen's Bench. This legislation will give this division exclusive family law jurisdiction throughout the entire province.

Mr. Speaker, most people in Saskatchewan don't even know that the Unified Court exists. The only people that are aware would be those that have had to go through this system.

The minister outlined the various services that will be attached to this court. For example, mediation services, custody and access investigation services, supervised access service, counselling in the case of family breakdown, and self-help kits including general information about the consequences of marriage breakdown. And as I view the different services that will be available through this court, Mr. Speaker, I think that what I was just speaking about a

few moments earlier, some of these concerns are going to certainly be raised through this Act, Bill No. 40, The Queen's Bench Act.

I hope that the government, Mr. Speaker, is able to implement all these services. I'm interested in the department's projections as to when the various services will be provided and which are currently being provided. For those not yet provided, financial implications may slow the pace down — how much I'm not sure, but certainly we want to raise those questions with the minister.

I think there must be considerable expense involved in these endeavours; however, I believe that when we look at families and family relationships and homes, that sometimes we may put too much emphasis on the money and the monetary amount rather than looking at family units and keeping them together. I believe when we get into committee I will get into the actual costs and time lines more in committee.

If all these services are made available through the Unified Court, Mr. Speaker, I believe they are sure to assist families suffering a breakdown. I feel for all individuals experiencing the ordeal of separation, divorce or custody hearings, and I feel for those children who must suffer through these difficult times. Any service made available to assist these individuals and children is more than welcome.

I would also like to acknowledge that this Bill contains some other amendments not related to the Unified Family Court. We have not heard from anyone opposed to these amendments. The official opposition certainly does not intend to hold up any parts of this legislation. We look forward to addressing some of the questions that we have and we trust that indeed The Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act to create a Family Law Division and to enact Consequential Amendments arising from the enactment of this Act will provide an avenue whereby we can again look forward to working with families to overcome their differences and build more solid and loving relationships.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 46

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Mitchell that **Bill No. 46 — An Act to amend The Provincial Court Act and to enact certain other provisions** be now read a second time.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with great regret that I rise to speak in this House on this issue. If this were a government of principle, this debate would not be necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the key focus of this issue is not money; it

is principle — the principle of law and order and justice and the responsibility of the government and the minister charged with upholding those principles. That is what the issue is here.

Before I begin my remarks I would like to say clearly, unequivocally, for the record — and I urge the members of the government side to listen carefully — the Liberal caucus does not support a salary increase of 24 per cent for the judges.

Now that I have said that, I will say that it was extremely short-sighted of the minister to have struck a binding commission if he were not prepared to implement its recommendations. And let's face reality — the Hon. Minister of Justice, formerly minister of Labour, knows full well what it means to give an arbitrator or a commission the powers he invested in them through the amendments to The Provincial Court Act.

If there were one person on the government side who believes that the Minister of Justice did not understand what the consequences were of giving the independent commission the power to create a binding settlement, I'd like that individual to step forward and state it for the record.

In fact the minister himself stated in his August 1993 submission to the Provincial Court Commission, and I quote directly:

The first element of keeping judges free from arbitrary interference with respect to their financial security from the legislative branch requires that there be a process in place for determining compensation that ensures that judges can be secure in the knowledge that their judicial decisions will not affect their financial security. The recent amendments to The Provincial Court Act provide this security.

And the hon. minister goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, and I quote again:

The recent amendments to the new Provincial Court Act provide this security. Under the recent amendments, the independent Provincial Court Commission makes recommendations respecting judicial salaries, remuneration, allowances, and vacation leave that must (and must is underlined in the original document, Mr. Speaker) must be implemented by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Mr. Speaker, as complicated as legal jargon sometimes gets, there's absolutely no mistaking the intent of this legislation. The minister was clear in his intent that the recommendations would be binding, but at no time did he exercise the judgement that could have set the maximum increase that government would support.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, this is a question of accountability on the part of the minister. I believe that people have a certain level of expectation of the

highest level of the Legislative Assembly. Is it unreasonable that members of the public should expect the individual who is paid a generous salary, supported by dozens of expert staff, to make decisions which have been fully thought out in terms of their impact, fairness, and affordability? I think not.

It is interesting to compare the Electoral Boundaries Commission with the Provincial Court Commission. The government had no intention of giving the Electoral Boundaries Commission the power to determine the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly. And it clearly indicated that they were to redistribute the boundaries to arrive at 58 seats — no if's, and's or but's.

Why then, if the government clearly had in mind a maximum limit that it was prepared to pay provincial court judges, why did the minister not charge the commission with the responsibility of coming down with a decision that fit within those parameters? If the Minister of Justice was exercising thoughtful judgement, why did he not clearly explain to the independent commission the upper limits for their decision making before giving them far-reaching powers to set the salaries of the judiciary?

There are only two possible answers to that question as I see it, Mr. Speaker. One is that the minister did not want to take the political risk of interfering with the judicial arm of government, and was therefore prepared to live with the recommendations of the independent commission no matter what they were. If that is the case, then he should indeed live with those results because that was his intent.

The second possible answer is that he changed his mind — changed his mind in midstream — after hearing the potential public outcry at the size of the settlement awarded. And for political reasons, nothing less than political reasons, he bowed to political pressure and actually broke the law.

Either answer is unacceptable. And both answers are as unacceptable as the 24 per cent salary increase which was permitted by the Justice minister's open-ended empowerment of the independent court commission.

Mr. Speaker, the ministry of Justice is one that must be above reproach; a ministry whose judgement cannot be suspect on any issue. Clearly the decisions of the Justice minister on this issue are based on political hindsight, not judicious forethought.

The taxpayers of Saskatchewan do not pay ministers for their hindsight, nor do they elect or pay them to pass the buck on sensitive political decisions to independent commissions without clearly defining the parameters within which these independent bodies are to work.

Mr. Speaker, it is unspeakable that the government members would be so narrow of vision as to reduce this to a simple issue of dollars and cents. Obviously the guiding vision behind this government is not one

of justice, not one of principle, but one of political expediency.

In support of this theory, I ask the members to consider whether the Minister of Justice would likely have overruled the decision of a binding arbitrator if the salary award would have been to a group such as health care workers or government employees.

Imagine for a moment a situation in which government could not come to an agreement as to the salaries of a government employees' union. Let us assume for a moment that the two negotiating partners, government and the employees' union, agreed to a binding arbitration arrangement. The question that we must answer is whether the Minister of Justice would dare overturn the recommendations of binding arbitration and what the political fallout from that decision would be.

I think the answer is fairly obvious, Mr. Speaker. I do not believe that the government would ever overturn a binding arbitration award with a group that has that kind of political clout.

And this is an undisputed fact. The undisputed fact is that judges are an easy target, an easy target because they already are at the top end of the public sector wage scale. And for people who say that somehow they don't compare with other people — deputy ministers make more than the Provincial Court judges; there are civil servants who make more than Provincial Court judges. It's not as if there aren't people who are already within that salary range who would be asking for significant increases over time.

The judges are an easy target. A lot of people have no interest in defending them. The question is whether the government has the right to break laws, break laws which ensure judicial independence, just because it is politically unpopular to give judges a pay raise.

Mr. Speaker, there is a much deeper issue at stake here. I'm rather astonished with the number of lawyers who sit on the government side, that they find this acceptable — acceptable when they are people who have given oaths that they are committed in fact to upholding the law.

The issue of judicial independence is paramount to the functioning of a democratic society. It is incomprehensible that any government would tamper with the independence of the judiciary by using political expediency as the touchstone for decisions on judges' salaries.

Mr. Speaker, judges are chosen from the legal profession for their qualifications and because of their experience. Each person who appears before a judge does so under the assumption that the process has selected the most capable individuals available to occupy the seat of justice. In order to attract individuals of integrity and to protect that integrity, we must ensure that the judiciary is, to quote the Minister of Justice, and I do quote: "secure in the knowledge that their judicial decisions will not affect their

financial security."

The actions of the Minister of Justice have clearly shown that he places a greater value on his political career and the political careers of his colleagues than he places on his responsibilities to uphold the laws of the province of Saskatchewan. I believe that the Minister of Justice has breached his responsibility as the gentleman in charge in our province of law and order. While he may have taken the politically correct action, he did not act in accordance with his responsibilities as the Minister of Justice. Therefore I believe that this is one of the most grave undertakings that has ever occurred in the province of Saskatchewan, and he should be held accountable.

(1445)

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals do not support a salary increase of 24 per cent for the judges; that's not the issue. The Liberals do not support the actions of the government to ignore the recommendations of an independent commission. The Liberals do not support any action to change the laws of the province simply because it suits their political aims. I believe that no government, no arm of government, and no individual is above the law and its penalties.

I want to take this opportunity to read verbatim from an article that was in the *Birch Hills Gazette*. I wonder if the member from Kinistino actually read this, because his article about this very topic was in the same paper the same day. Now I'm going to read this to you because it's from Pastor Randy Ariss, and I quote:

There is an interesting passage of Scripture in Psalm 15, that, were the government of Saskatchewan interested in walking righteously before the Lord, they would do well to abide by. "Lord, who may abide by your tabernacle? Who may dwell in your holy hill? He who swears to his own hurt and does not change . . ." The Living Bible puts it this way: "... keeps a promise even if it ruins him."

What the government of Saskatchewan appears to have lost sight of is the meaning of the words such as integrity, honour, and honesty. To give your word (is) to commit to a course of action, and then to renege on your word because you're not satisfied with the result of your decision, is nothing more than moral cowardice. If the decision of the government of Saskatchewan was that the province could not afford to give the judges of the province a raise, then they should have made that decision before submitting the request to binding arbitration, not after. They were obviously hoping that the Board of Arbitration would make the tough decision for them.

Never mind all the pious-sounding talk about struggling with a tough decision, and having the courage to make tough decisions. The men

and women in power have proven to be untrustworthy, and at some point in time, it may be you or I they give their word to, and then renege. I am not political (Pastor Ariss says). I have never been. I am saddened that men gave their word, and then men backed out. I remember a time when a person would rather die than go back on their word. Once again I have to ask: "Where is the outrage?" "Where is the hue and cry from the common man?" Have we become so morally bankrupt that we don't even care anymore?

This was not a case of a government faced with two alternate courses of action, and having to choose one, and thus displeasing the other side. This was the government of Saskatchewan giving their word to abide by a decision that would be made by the arbitration board, and then not keeping their word. And then they have the gall to pass legislation to make it impossible for that lie to be challenged in a court of law. How far have we fallen, (he asks) and how much further must we fall?

The issue here is not the 20 percent increase; the issue is not whether the judges deserve the increase, or whether the province can afford to give the increase. The issue is a person's word being his bond. If the men and women have proven to be liars in this situation, in what situation can you trust them?

I think that Pastor Ariss has said it as well as anybody in the province of Saskatchewan who has written about this particular item.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very sad day in Saskatchewan when the Government of Saskatchewan yet again will prohibit people from being able to go to a court of law and defend themselves. They've done it with civil servants; they have done it with farm families; they would have done it with the upgrader, and they are going to do it today. And I find that a very, very tragic situation.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome detailed discussion of this Bill later in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments as well to address the Bill before us and the issue before us, and that being the court Act, the Act that addresses judges' salaries in this province.

I think one of the things that we have been bringing forward and would like to again reiterate is the fact of the principle of democracy and law and justice and order in the province of Saskatchewan — not only in Saskatchewan but across this fair dominion of ours. Governments in this country and in this province are also democratically elected to ensure law and order and good government in the land. We all were elected by citizens who put their faith and trust in us. And I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, that there is any arm of government that is above the law and its penalties.

However, one would ask, what happens when government no longer honours its laws? What happens when it strips the rights of individuals to challenge its decisions? And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we can look at many jurisdictions around the world, some that are so-called democracies, where people do not have the same protection and the rights and the freedoms that we truly enjoy.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, even though the government and the minister would like to argue that the recommendations of the commission regarding a 24 per cent pay increase were just too exuberant . . . exorbitant, pardon me, Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that the issue we're discussing certainly goes far beyond that.

I would like to just bring to the attention of the House a letter we received by Mr. Gerald Seniuk, and he says:

The most disturbing deception is in the government's claim that they could never have expected the commission's result.

The Schmeiser commission, all of whom were named by the minister and not picked independently as in this commission, and two of whom were lay people, recommended \$104,000 in the first year in 1990, with percentage increases in the next two years which would have brought the final figure to almost \$112,000 by 1993.

In our discussions with government officials and the minister, it was conceded the Schmeiser commission recommendation was fair, although they did not want to pay for it. Since they conceded they knew the first commission was in the ballpark, how can they claim they are surprised when the second commission, which was more independent than the first, came in somewhere in the same range? As a result, cynics now suspect the minister always planned to do what they are now doing and that we have been manipulated and used as pawns and set up as a political football. Obviously we need a commission to protect us.

And that's from a legal professional in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I think that basically points out the major concern that has been raised here, Mr. Speaker. And that's the deception that we have seen in the fact that the minister has continually and the government has continually argued the 24 per cent as if it was a one-year, one-time figure. And yet if we look at that 24 per cent and the fact that the commission would be looking back, much the same as the Schmeiser commission, back to the period from 1990 through to a culmination, I believe, in 1996 — the way the new process of agreement is; the fact that there is a pay increase this year with two more increments — that 24 per cent basically boils down to an increase of 4 per

cent over the six years.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you look at it in that light and you realize that a number of government officials, in fact even the deputy minister of Justice was handed — while he was making the recommendations of a 2.5 per cent increase to the judges — was actually given an increase of some 6 per cent.

And one would argue, was that fair? Was it fair that the deputy minister of Justice should on one hand inform his minister that no, I don't think we can live with this, we'd better look at giving judges a little less, then to accept . . . I think the deputy minister should have accepted . . . if nothing else, indicated to the Minister of Justice that it would have been appropriate for him to receive the same kind of increase as he is recommending for the judges.

I'd just like to comment on the fact that the Minister of Justice made some very sound arguments when he brought forward the legislation back in May 1993. Last May the Justice minister quoted the Supreme Court, saying that it was necessary to take the veto power away from government in regards to deciding salaries, pensions, allowances, etc., of judges.

He also went on to say the focus of his amendments were to ensure that benefits for Provincial Court judges and the method of determining those benefits adequately respect the independence of the court and the judges of that court.

The minister also indicated, in his defence of why he was bringing in the legislation and he added:

The fact that an independent commission with the ability to make binding recommendations will be considering matters of judicial compensation will help to ensure that judicial independence will be indeed preserved.

Even in his speech regarding the Bill at the time which said the commission . . . said, and I quote the Supreme Court, in a second reading speech, he quoted:

The essence of such financial security is that the right to salary and pension should be established by law and not be subject to arbitrary interference by the executive in a manner that could affect judicial independence.

Mr. Speaker, I think as we see what has transpired with us today, that indeed I think that the minister has all of a sudden taken an about-face. And I'm not sure if he's forgotten about exactly the points that he raised when he very adequately argued for the binding commission and the appointment of the commission and the binding agreement.

It would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that the principle that we're arguing and we're discussing this afternoon and bringing forward, the principle of law and order and justice, it would be appropriate for the Minister of Justice to indeed have listened to the very sound,

reasonable arguments that he presented back in May of 1993.

We've also noted that at that time too, when we were debating the Bill we had suggested to the minister that there might be some pitfalls. And one of the major pitfalls that we foresaw in the legislation was the fact that that legislation made the commission's findings binding. It was a binding agreement.

And one would ask, why would the government do that? Why would the government allow or even implement a piece of legislation and make it binding in light of the fact that the government has shown over the past three years that legislation didn't really mean a lot. Legislation in place didn't mean a lot; that they would terminate an agreement if they felt led to, like we saw with the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contract. But they decided to make this commission . . . give them the latitude to come up with the report and make it binding upon the government.

Now I understand just from talking to the legal community, that one of the reasons for that was that the Justice department had been in contact with the judges and trying to work out a compromise and an understanding. And they had agreed to the fact that yes, okay, appoint another commission, allow the commission — give them the latitude — the ability to look at this in a sound and reasonable manner, and come back to the House with recommendations and we will agree to accept whatever the commission comes up with.

However, we want the government to give us their word that they will accept those conditions as well, and we want some kind of an understanding that goes just beyond a handshake. And I wonder why they would do that. It would seem to me that normally a handshake in the province and we normally, as individuals, deal with a handshake and we believe that when we make a commitment to another person that that handshake is our word, but they ask for the government . . . and the government agreed to bring in the binding legislation saying that we will agree to this.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when the judges agreed to that, they realized that if the commission at the end of the day, looking at all the . . . listening to and hearing all the discussion on deficit reduction, looking at the fact, realizing that many people across our province had taken very minimal wage increases if any at all, the judges realized that the commission was in a very solid and sound position of coming back with a very low recommendation. The judges could have . . . or the commission could have come back with a recommendation that said no, we think maybe 6 or 7 per cent over three years would be appropriate.

Now I would suggest to you if the commission would have done that, the minister would have no doubt had a very broad smile on his face saying, well that's about right where we needed it. But the judges may not have been happy; but the indication is the judges would have agreed and would have lived by that because

they had agreed to that principle of binding legislation.

(1500)

However, as we see, this government again, as it has time and time again, has continued to show its disregard for legislation, even its own legislation, and I believe that's unfortunate. It's unfortunate that a minister who has stood in this Assembly and espoused the virtues of justice and law and order would decide at the end of the day that it's more appropriate to disobey the laws, his own laws, rather than following the laws.

And I'd like to . . . Also I note an article in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* of Monday, April 4. It was written by an individual from Saskatoon, and the headline is "Consequences of judges' case far reaching."

At last, we have Justice Minister Bob Mitchell's decision on the raise in judges' salaries. And what a decision it is: Wave the magic wand of retroactive legislation and pretend the whole thing never happened . . . no independent commission, no binding decision, nothing.

This is the government that decided some time after the commission was formed to investigate judges' salaries, that its decision should be binding. We heard a lot of high-sounding praises at the time about maintaining the integrity of the judiciary. I hope the judiciary has some integrity; the government certainly doesn't.

I think that reflects some of the concern by people right across this province and certainly a number of editorials that we have seen since the decision has come down; a reflection which, Mr. Speaker, reflects on each and every one of us as elected representatives duly elected by our constituents to represent them.

I'm reminded of a process that the, I believe, Reform Party went through and as I was observing that process — it's regarding euthanasia — they were contacting people via satellite or, I believe — I'm not sure if it was a satellite hook-up — but they were talking to people, they were asking people to phone in and let them know how they felt about certain issues and about this issue.

I think, Mr. Speaker, when people go to the polls to elect representatives, they go to the polls electing individuals who they believe will give leadership. Now they certainly expect each and every one of us to give good, solid, sound leadership, to be listening, and to show compassion and understand and be caring people. But at the same time I think they expect us to at least listen to the concerns they may raise, and even on this issue.

And no doubt in the coffee shops after the announcement of the increase was made by the commission of the recommendations, the coffee

shops talk was judges don't deserve a 24 per cent increase. And the minister heard that concern. And the government heard that concern. I heard that concern, Mr. Speaker. And everyone around us heard that concern. The fact was the 24 per cent overshadowed the other most important issue about integrity of individuals and the integrity of government and law and order in this province.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you, I would ask anyone, what perception do people across this province have of this government or even each and every one of us as MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) when they look to government for leadership and find that government is not even willing to abide by its own laws, and even by the binding agreements that they would pass upon us?

I think, Mr. Speaker, it certainly was important that the government step aside. And I think in light of the decision that has been made and in light of the Bill that is before us, when the minister was arguing that it's important that the salary disputes be independent from government, I think that was truly an honest statement by the minister. And the minister was being very open in what he was saying and therefore he came up with the Bill that set in place the commission.

However, Mr. Speaker, the minister should have realized and as representatives we should have been also aware of the fact that if we're not willing to abide by the rules we establish and set an example, then we'd better not pass that type of legislation.

I look at the problem that is happening in Bosnia right now, and we look at the atrocities that are taking place. We're also aware of the fact that the UN (United Nations) has threatened the Serbs on numerous and numerous occasions. And as the President of the United States said the other day in his frustration when they're trying to protect innocent people in Bosnia and the Serbs are attacking these small communities and they call for fire power and the President of the United States said, if we're not willing to go in and really back up our statements, we better not make statements; we better not stand up and say this is what we're going to do, if we can't back up our words with some action.

And I think what the minister has done here and what we have here is the minister made a commitment to law and order and justice and integrity in this province. He made a commitment to reaching out and to try to come to grips with the judges' salaries in this province. The unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker, is we've basically moved away, and the legislation we have before us today, we have backed up from our commitment to removing the judiciary . . . and to creating the independence of the judiciary in this province. We have backed away from our commitment to law and order and justice, and there's a fair debate going across this country today about law and order and justice and about people, how people are held accountable for their actions.

It would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that there was and

is only one real action for the government and for the Premier and for the minister. And the minister certainly has taken the time to acknowledge that maybe this was a mistake, maybe we shouldn't have gone as far as . . . in fact, I believe in a comment the minister made on March 22, 1994, after he had finally come forward and given his decision to this House, to the people of the province of Saskatchewan, after missing some two or three deadlines . . . I'd like to quote a little bit of what the minister's statement was.

In an attempt to address this long-standing problem, this Assembly in June of last year approved a process by which the salaries of Provincial Court judges would be determined by an independent commission, with the recommendations of the commission to be legally binding on both the judges and the government. The legislation received the support of the Assembly and of all parties in this Assembly.

Today, with the benefit of hindsight, it is obvious to all that this decision was a mistake.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that really was a mistake. If we are willing to sit down and make laws, we better be willing to realize the consequences if we're going to break those laws before we ever make them.

And I would trust that the minister and that this government, if it's going to make laws in the future, will sit down and, as we indicated to the minister last year, will take due diligence in determining the types of laws they're going to bring forward and whether or not at the end of the day that they will be able to live by and abide by the laws that they establish.

If they can't, and as we've seen on a number of occasions that they're continually going to show disregard and disrespect for the laws that they make, for the laws that we have around us, for the rights of individuals, then I believe, Mr. Speaker, we are facing a scary time in our province.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many areas that we could look at. And when we look at the disregard this government has had for laws, I'd just like to go to another article and just a few comments before I sit down and allow the Bill to move on into committee.

A headline that I picked up, and it's from the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* again, and this is Tuesday, March 9 — the headline reads, "A scary disregard for the province's laws."

A clear abuse of power by government is something that should make us all nervous.

I think that is unfortunate. It is the type of argument and statement that none of us really want to hear.

And unfortunately though, like with most things these days, our outrage depends on the relative merits of the abuse.

In a climate where there are fewer and fewer moral absolutes, it is not surprising people look the other way when they're not being affected by a particularly foul decision of government.

And I think that's what happened here. People were more interested in looking at the 24 per cent than in law and order and justice.

And what makes the whole process disturbing is how it's consistent with the way this government has behaved in the past.

Since taking power in November of 1991 the Romanow government has broken countless contracts it didn't like or deem to be in the public interest. With the power to change the law, it sees nothing wrong with breaking it and then retroactively making its actions legal.

It began with The Crown Employees Contracts Act which voided all contracts the previous Devine government had signed with its employees. To justify breaking the contracts the government pointed to the unconscionable contract of former SaskPower president George Hill. Realizing there would be little if any public support for Hill, the government knew it could act without fear of the political consequences.

I believe it's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that a government would look at one contract and put everybody in the same basket.

Then came the decision to arbitrarily change contracts individual farmers had with the government under the gross revenue insurance plan, GRIP. With the province deep in debt, the government said it could not afford the program as it was structured. It seemed to make sense and the only people who protested were the farmers affected.

Next came the NewGrade heavy oil upgrader issue. This was another unconscionable agreement the NDP had inherited from the Tories. But by refusing to live up to the terms of the contract with Federated Co-operatives Ltd., the government knew it would ultimately get its way. Now we have the judges being victimized by the government. The question is: who's next?

I believe, Mr. Speaker, the long and short when we look at the Bill before us and the debate that has taken place, it's imperative that as lawgivers and lawmakers in this Assembly and in the province that we sit down and we seriously consider our actions. I believe it's time the government sat down and seriously considered their actions. And maybe it's time the people of Saskatchewan took a little more serious, a closer, look at what has been transpiring over the past number of years and realize that just because an action may not affect them today, it doesn't mean that

a similar action may not affect them tomorrow.

And I think of the meeting just the other evening in Davidson with regards to the small retailers who met and the problems they're facing with the environment Act. Mr. Speaker, I think when you look at the people who were there, the people who were at that meeting were the individuals who were directly affected today; but the unfortunate part is the same actions on that environment Bill are going to affect a number of people in the future. But just because they're not affected today, they weren't really that interested; they may not be interested.

I think people, Mr. Speaker . . . the same thing is apparent here. It's apparent that because it just affects one group, everyone else is quiet. What happens tomorrow if government action affects another group of individuals and they say, will you come and help us? Do you think that individual or group are going to be interested in helping?

I think, Mr. Speaker, we need to stand up for law and order and justice and what is right. We need to stand up for the rights of individuals.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are many more comments that could be made on this subject and I know we will have an opportunity to debate this issue in committee. And I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the time to raise a few of the concerns and I look forward to debate in Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought I would take advantage of my right to speak again in this debate by reason of the rather exaggerated remarks that have come from across the way during the debate of this Bill. And there are a number of things that must be said, Mr. Speaker.

The first thing that I want to say is that we quite understood, and I tried to make it clear in my second reading speech, that we quite understood the principles involved in this matter. And it was hardly necessary for the Leader of the Third Party to try and dramatize what we had already agreed would be the case, as she did in her remarks today.

This was not a question of politics, Mr. Speaker. At no point was this a question of politics. It wasn't a matter of somebody going out to the coffee shops and testing the wind. That wasn't the point.

(1515)

What we had here was in effect a clash of two very important and riveting ideas. On the one hand was the supreme importance of any government, this government or any government, to keep its agreements and follow its legislation. And we acknowledge the importance of that principle. And nobody believes that more than do members of my own party.

And the reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is because my

party really believes in government. My party believes that government is the instrumentality by which so many of society's problems can be addressed and by which the human condition can be advanced. And that is not the same philosophy or approach as some of my friends opposite.

Some of their positions over the years, indeed the philosophy underlying their party, is that we got too much government. What's wrong with Canada is we got too much. We need less government. Government shouldn't intrude so far. Government shouldn't do so many things. Government shouldn't pass laws with respect to part-time workers and the dreadful social problems they face in today's economy. And so on and so forth.

Our party believes that government has the capacity to solve some of these problems and should solve them. And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, we believe in the integrity of government. And so we will respect our agreements and we will follow our legislation unless in extreme circumstances. And that's the problem we had in this case.

We have worked since the day on which we assumed office, the transition being completed by November 21, 1991, we have worked from that day to restore the fiscal integrity of this province. That meant immediately taking steps to try and wrestle the huge deficit, the huge and chronic deficit that has faced this province continuously since 1982, to wrestle that problem to the ground. And that has been our priority. And every member of this House and every person living in this province knows and understands that that has been our priority.

And we have been able over the last two and a half years to fashion a consensus, a consensus of the people of this province, around the need to curb expenses and the need to get on top of this problem of the deficit. Then having done that, Mr. Speaker, we then have to get at the problem of paying back the debt. And we have this consensus built around those ideas, and it's been difficult to do.

A lot of people have had to make a lot of sacrifices along the way to buying into that consensus. But they've done it. To the great credit of the people and the organizations of this province, they have accepted the challenge of getting this province back on its feet financially. And they have accepted in a very broad consensus the things that must be done in order to accomplish this.

Now it is in that setting that the award comes from the commission studying the matter of judges' salaries. I've said in this House before that the commission is . . . the make-up of the commission was . . . these are solid, sound people. These are highly respected people trying to do the best job they could, and I know they did. The problem with it though is that it proposes an increase for the Provincial Court judges which threatens this consensus that we have fashioned.

It is our profound belief that if we were to have made

an exception of the judges, paid them the amount of the award, that would so damage the consensus that I've been describing that we would be unable to maintain our initiative of putting the fiscal affairs of this province back in good order and put Saskatchewan back on its feet.

We saw that as a real threat, Mr. Speaker. We believe it to be the case, as sincerely as I can possibly put those words forward, and we were not prepared to risk all of the work that we've done over the last two and a half years, as would have been the case if we had respected this award.

Now that was a tough decision, Mr. Speaker, because in coming to that decision, we had to do two things. We had to say we will not be bound by our agreement to accept the award of this commission as binding and we will not be bound by our own legislation. And those are dreadfully important principles and only in the most extreme circumstances should they be departed from.

We concluded on this side of the House that the circumstances in which we are in constitute the kind of extreme circumstances which justify a government doing what we're doing here. We simply cannot live with the award.

The consequences of living with it would be calamitous. All of the groups and organizations and individuals who have sacrificed so much would then turn to us and say, I want my demands satisfied. My case is every bit as good as the judges' case. If the judges are entitled to this kind of treatment, I'm entitled to this kind of treatment too.

And, Mr. Speaker, there would literally be no end to it, nor should there be — nor should there be. Because I believe that most people and most groups in this province could make a case that would be at least as good as the cases that the judges put forward.

And on what basis could we turn to them and say, well the judges had a good case but you don't have a good case? You don't have a good case, welfare mom. You don't have a good case, unemployed worker. You don't have a good case, part-time worker. You don't have a case that's anywhere near as good as the judges so we're not going to give it to you.

I say that in support of my argument that the consensus that we have around the need for restraint and the need for fiscal integrity is fragile and would be threatened if we had simply accepted the award of the commission.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we did not. It had nothing to do with the politics of the question — nothing to do with the politics of the question — and everything to do with our ability to deliver on our commitment to the people of Saskatchewan to put the fiscal affairs of this province back in good order. That's what we were about, Mr. Speaker. That's what we were about.

Now really dreadful things have been said from across

the House during this debate. Judges have been described as easy targets. Judges have been described as not having very much political power and so we felt free to pick on them. Nothing could be further from our minds as we made this decision, Mr. Speaker. Nothing could have been further from our minds.

We have great respect for this court, great respect for it. The Premier, when he was the attorney general, set the court up. The court has been staffed with excellent people over the years. This court, Mr. Speaker, is on the cutting edge of developments among provincial courts in this country.

I cite, for example, the excellent work that members of the court have done on the aboriginal justice question. Some members of this court, Mr. Speaker, have achieved national renown for the work that they have done on aboriginal justice questions. Similarly, our Provincial Court is right on the cutting edge of gender issues with respect to matters that fall within their jurisdiction. And they have made a study, Mr. Speaker, that places them in that position, right at the vanguard of developments, of judicial developments with respect to questions of gender.

There are other studies going on in this court of which we're very proud and which provide leadership nationally on these questions. I won't take the time of the House to go into them, but let me tell you that we are very proud of this court and we are in no sense approaching this with any mean-mindedness as far as the Provincial Court judges are concerned.

I want to say one other thing, Mr. Speaker, and this is very important. We know that our judges are underpaid. When the government of Premier Blakeney left office in 1982 the judges in this court were, I believe, the highest paid in the land, or right up there at the top of the list. When our government took office in 1991 those same judges were now the lowest paid judges in the land. And today they are the lowest paid judges in the land.

And that is not a satisfactory situation. Something has to be done about it. We have gotten about the task of doing something about it with the Bill that is in ... with the announcements that we've made and in the approach that we've taken to this matter. And they will receive a two and a half per cent increase for last year and a two and a half per cent increase for this year.

Now they would argue and lots of people would argue, with validity, that that's not enough. And of course it's not enough because it doesn't treat our judges fairly in relation to the other judges of this country. But, Mr. Speaker, not all at once, not as recommended by the commission. That we cannot do and maintain the consensus that we have built in this province around the principles of restraint and the principles of fiscal integrity. And that it seems to us is a principle against which the other principles have to give way.

And when you come right down to it, Mr. Speaker, as

I've said during question period in answer to the member from Moosomin, it was a question of either you do it or you don't do it. You either pay the award or you don't pay the award. If you decide that you can't pay the award, then there's only one thing you can do. You got to reach back and fix the legislation, and that's what we've done here. There was no alternative; you either do it or you don't do it.

And you don't escape that argument or put it into any different kind of context or plane by complaining about retroactivity and raising the dread R-word and drawing analogies to other situations where retroactive legislation has been used. You either pay it or you don't pay it. And if you don't pay it, you have to take action as we have done in this Bill.

So I want to say those words, Mr. Speaker, because in one way or another the government has to speak to the judges. And I try to do so now by saying, as I have said in debate, that this had not to do with the court. This was not a question of trying to get . . . to take any action with respect to the judges themselves. We are proud of our judges and we're very pleased with the court and we believe that they need to be paid at a higher level, and that will happen in the course of time.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, I go back to my main argument, and that is that in these circumstances the government was in a position of really having no alternative. If we were to have respected this award and simply paid it, then that would have been, I believe, the end of our efforts to hold the consensus together around the principle of restraint.

What the opposition parties are saying, Mr. Speaker, is really very simple. It is that a government must in all circumstances be bound by its agreement and by its legislation.

And a graphic image comes to mind. And that is the image of a deer crossing the highway at night, suddenly caught in the bright headlights of a speeding car, pinned by those lights, frozen, hypnotized, unable to leap to safety, simply staring at the headlights as the onrushing car bears down upon it. Is it seriously argued that government is as helpless as that doomed deer? Are we caught in the bright headlights of our agreement and our legislation, and must we simply stand here staring at the headlights, allowing the onrushing vehicle to do what it will?

Because that's what's at stake here, Mr. Speaker. This award presents the same threat to our efforts to restrain public expenditures as the speeding vehicle behind the bright headlights presents to the startled deer.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I say no. Governments are not that helpless. When the public interest demands it, when the situation permits of no alternative, we may leap to safety, escaping the dreadful consequences of the speeding vehicle. And that's what we're doing with this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 3:31 p.m. until 3:39 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 28

Van Mulligen	Lorje
Thompson	Pringle
Wiens	Murray
Shillington	Draper
Teichrob	Sonntag
Johnson	Flavel
Atkinson	Cline
Carson	Scott
Mitchell	Crofford
MacKinnon	Kluz
Penner	Knezacek
Cunningham	Harper
Bradley	Keeping
Koenker	Jess

Nays — 9

Swenson	D'Autremont
Neudorf	Goohsen
Martens	Haverstock
Boyd	Bergman
Toth	

The Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask for leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, this afternoon, in the west gallery we have some very influential municipal politicians, and they belong to the SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) board of directors. And I would like to introduce Murray Westby, mayor of Watrous; Mark Thompson, alderman from Saskatoon, and chairman of the board; Keith Carleton, the RM (rural municipality) of . . . I'm not quite sure, but he's a reeve of an RM in the south . . .

An Hon. Member: — Whiska Creek.

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Okay. John Lipp, councillor from the City of Regina; Alphonse Kurzinger from the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association); and Sinc Harrison, who is the president of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities).

I would ask all members to welcome them to the House today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister today in welcoming our special guests here today, and having them watch the debate

in the legislature. I'm sure they've been debating some very weighty subjects themselves earlier today, and it's not a debate that will probably go away. So I join with the minister in welcoming them here, and we look for more visits.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to welcome the SAMA board, and in particular their chair, Councillor Mark Thompson from Saskatoon. Mark and I served for several years together on Saskatoon City Council and it's nice to see him here in Regina, observing the proceedings today. And I think it would . . . it's not inappropriate for me to note in this most political of chambers, that Councillor Thompson is now seeking a change in his status with respect to the mayoralty campaign in Saskatoon.

Welcome to Regina today, Mark.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund New Careers Corporation Vote 59

The Chair: — I would ask at this point that the minister please introduce the official who has joined us here today.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I'd like to introduce Stuart Kramer who is the acting president of New Careers Corporation, and he's sitting to my right.

(1545)

Item 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, Mr. Kramer, thank you for coming in today.

Before we start, I wonder if the minister would go through the purposes for the New Careers Corporation. It's had somewhat of a change of direction in its history. It started out in 1984 under the previous administration, but has changed its course since the new government has come to power. And I wonder if you would mind explaining to the Assembly exactly what the role of the New Careers Corporation is today.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Yes, I will hand over this document. But basically the mandate of the New Careers Corporation is to provide Saskatchewan people receiving social assistance with opportunities for increased independence by preparing them for employment.

And the corporation is able to achieve this through the provision of integrated programs that combine career planning, job-search training, education

improvement, vocational skill training, and work experience programs.

The goals of New Careers Corporation is to enhance the employability of persons receiving social assistance by assisting them with career planning and vocational services, providing education and training, providing employment and on-the-job opportunities.

A secondary goal for the corporation is to assist Saskatchewan communities through non-profit organizations and non-governmental organizations to achieve their goals. And we give priority to projects that provide services to lower income people in the target groups of seniors, people with disability, aboriginal people, and children living in poverty. And I will hand this document over to you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. In light of the current situation with the case-load on Social Services, with 80,000 people being on Social Service assistance, it's very important that a program such as this be in place which encourages employment, which provides opportunities to learn and to provide employment.

So, Madam Minister, I wonder if you could explain what the corporation has been doing in the past year along this line to provide employment for those people who are on welfare, particularly in the light of the fact that we have such a dramatic increase in Social Services over the past year. I believe we're increasing at the rate right now of approximately a thousand new clients per month.

I wonder if you could explain what New Careers Corporation is doing to try and aid these people?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What we're doing to try and aid these people, and if you look on page 3 of the document I've just given you, which is the overview of the New Careers Corporation, we have applied . . . have been able to assist 1,500 clients in career planning and job search. We've assisted 1,665 clients at work preparation centres, 2,550 clients through skill training, 1,250 clients in the community employment program, and 360 clients through the work experience program for a total of 7,325 clients.

I guess the other point I'd like to make is that I have been in touch with Mr. Axworthy, who is the federal minister that basically is in charge of the federal government's social reform program. And what we're suggesting to Mr. Axworthy is that instead of providing new structures, new administrative structures, to assist Canadians that are looking for work, what we might want to do is use existing provincial structures such as New Careers Corporation to deliver a single-window service to those people who are unemployed or living on social assistance.

One of the things that I do know is that if you look at the statistics and the people that are coming to New Careers Corporation, those people who are unemployed in this province and are employable do in fact want to work, they want the opportunity to

improve their skills and work experience, they want the opportunity to have access to education — educational opportunities and training opportunities. And it's a matter of redesigning the existing system in this country so that the impediments that are presently there are alleviated so that we can have services that meet the individual needs of clients in order that they can obtain the skills necessary to get a job and keep it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The idea of working together with the federal government on this idea and providing what you might call one-stop shopping for this kind of a service, I think has some value. Because too many times within government the funds available for any particular program are eaten up by the administration; so if you have more than one program dealing with basically the same service, you have that much more administration.

If the service can be delivered through one program, then certainly there is a cost saving. Which brings to mind the question: why is this dealing with Social Service clients — this particular department, New Careers Corporation — dealing with Social Service clients and being handled by the Department of Education through manpower and training?

Now is there a duplication of administration in this particular case, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I was a proponent of the idea when I was Minister of Social Services that New Careers Corporation should in fact be with the Department of Education, Training and Employment. It seems to me . . . and what we are trying to do is not simply put social assistance clients through an employment situation where they can get off of social assistance and then on to UI (Unemployment Insurance). What we're trying to do is link people who are on social assistance into education and training programs that will give them qualifications or credentials that they could then use to obtain employment.

If you look at existing programs all across this country for social assistance clients, they tend to be: get off of social assistance, get into an employment situation, and then when that employment situation is over, they then can go onto UI. What we're trying to do, is to link those clients into apprenticeship training programs, into programs that will give them a credential, a skill, a piece of paper that will be recognized by employers so that they can get real jobs and keep them.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. That is indeed what I believe should be the goal and I agree with you on that.

But I'm very interested in a comment that you made when you talk of people on social assistance going through this program and them moving on to UI.

How many people that have gone through these programs in the last year have actually received long-term, meaningful employment? And how many

have simply met the requirement for UI and then moved off into UI? Are there significant numbers either way? Could you explain that, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — If you look at our programs, in the career planning and job search program we had 1,500 people go through that program. That is to assist a social assistance client in determining what sorts of careers they are interested in and the kinds of credentials that they will require in order to go into those careers.

For other social assistance clients, they may have the paper qualifications but they don't have the skills to know how to go about doing a résumé. So the career planning and job search aspect of New Careers is to assist those people.

In the skills training area, we are sending social assistance clients to adult basic education programs where they can do upgrading — the 5-10 program and then the 11-12 program.

Now those people will be in ABE programs or adult basic education programs and they won't be coming out of those programs and onto unemployment insurance. Hopefully what's happening is they're coming out of those programs and going into other post-secondary institutions like SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) or going on to university once they have the proper qualifications.

In the work experience program, that is basically the construction part of New Careers Corporation where they are on sites constructing, perhaps helping a low income housing . . . or the housing authorities with some of their needs. They may be in a non-profit day care centre where they're assisting the day care centre in doing some new construction.

We have a home repair program. It's a pilot program in Saskatoon to try and improve the housing stock. And for those people, some of the people already have the appropriate skills and just need a leg-up in order to get out into the workplace and gain that valuable work experience. For others in the program, they're interested in going into the trades and want the work experience to determine whether in fact they want to go off to a technical school to get the skills that are necessary.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. When you mentioned the 5 to 12 program and the 11 . . . or 5 to 10 and the 11 to 12 program, do the participants within that program receive any salary or remuneration? And if they do, do they then pay UI premiums on those salaries?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Those people that are in the adult basic education programs are still on social assistance. They're still receiving an allowance to go into those programs. And what we're finding is that most of the people that are going into those programs are single-parent mothers with children. They're interested in upgrading their skills, or their basic skills,

i.e., adult basic education, and then they can go on through student loans or whatever into technical schools or universities.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So, Madam Minister, these particular people would continue to receive their benefits from Social Services. It wouldn't be classified as a salary of any sort, therefore they would not be paying any UI premiums?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You're absolutely correct.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. How about the people that are on the community employment program? When they receive a remuneration, is that classified as a salary and would they pay UI premiums on that income?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The community employment program and the work experience program are job related. They would receive a salary and they would pay into unemployment insurance. And when the program ended, if they didn't go on to another job, they would in fact be entitled to receive unemployment insurance benefits.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. When a person enters into either one of those two programs, the community employment program or the work experience program, what length of time does the program normally run for for an individual?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We would have anywhere from 10 to 52 weeks.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I wonder if you could give me an average though. If you have a thousand people who go through — well you've got 1,250 and 360 on the other — these 1,500, 1,610 people, when they've gone through, what would the average have been for each of the individuals?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Average would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20 weeks.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, we seem to be coming pretty close to that magic number of what a person has to put in to receive UI. And you were stating earlier that you felt it was wrong that social assistance provides the job and then the person moves off from this program, or any other similar type of program, to UI. And yet you state that your numbers average out to 20 weeks. And I could be wrong on this because there has been some changes to UI in the last year or so, but I believe 20 weeks in Saskatchewan is the amount of time required to qualify for UI.

Is there some reason that 20 weeks is the average? Is the consideration given to put people into the position to receive UI?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I understand your point. But one of the realities with unemployment insurance is that if you're collecting unemployment insurance, you can then be shifted into training programs. So my

understanding is that for a lot of the people that we're talking about, they then go on to unemployment insurance training programs in technical schools because they've been linked into an apprenticeship program, or some non-apprenticeship trade, so then they go into these programs so that they can get the kinds of skills that employers are looking for.

The Chair: — The member for Saskatoon Sutherland-University.

Mr. Koenker: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, with leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

(1600)

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a very good and a very great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly this afternoon four young people who are visitors to Canada and to our Assembly this afternoon.

We have with us Derk Shilling — I'm going to ask him to stand — Derk Shilling, from Hamburg, Germany. He's an engineering student who is touring Canada. He started in Vancouver and is working his way to Toronto.

We also have Barbara Doichel, who is from Buxtehude, Germany, and is a librarian there.

We have also Rose Oduho, who is from the Sudan. Rose is a first-year English student at the University of Regina and plans to spend three more years here studying nursing.

We also have finally Gesche Doichel, who is from Buxtehude, Germany, and has spent the last year here at the University of Regina studying native Canadian literature, and she will be leaving for home in August.

Derk and Barbara are leaving tonight for Toronto by bus. So they'll be seeing much of the great Canadian countryside.

I'd ask all members to give them a warm welcome to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund New Careers Corporation Vote 59

Item 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome the students here today and wish them well in their visits to Canada and on their bus trips to Toronto.

Madam Chairman . . . Madam Minister. Sorry about that. Madam Minister, your program is shifting people from welfare, which is a provincial responsibility, through the system, providing them with some training, to UI, which is a federal responsibility.

Now you shake your head when I say that, but you've already said that that happens in a good number of cases here. So I'm wondering what numbers, what percentages of these 1,610 people did that actually happen to and how many of them went on to receive employment?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I will say this. That one of the reasons why we want to engage the federal government in social reform in this country is because we have played . . . and provinces all across this country are doing this, and Alberta is a classic example. And what they have done is they have shifted people off of social assistance into short programs and then onto unemployment insurance.

We acknowledge in this province, that we have the situation where we have people, some people, not all people, but there are some people in our programs that work for 20 weeks, then go on to UI. Many of those people, we are advised, go into training programs through unemployment insurance because what they have done is reduced the benefits for those people who are unemployed and shifted the money into training for people who are unemployed. All provinces play this shell game that you are referring to.

What our province is saying to the federal government is that we need to have a meaningful social reform in this country so that people who are unemployed — and when we say unemployed we're talking about people who are on social assistance, and people who are on unemployment — have avenue, have access to meaningful training programs that in fact will lead to a job.

And so I guess what I want to say to the member is that it is in fact very disappointing that Mr. Axworthy chose to cancel the meeting that my colleague, the Minister of Social Services and myself were to attend earlier this week. Now I understand why he cancelled the meeting because he hasn't been undergoing much consultation with the provinces.

But we have some things we want to talk to the federal government about because we have provincial programs, we have federal programs, we have federal-provincial programs, and in fact because of jurisdictional issues, because of rules, it sometimes makes it very difficult to deliver a training program to people that makes sense and will in fact assist them.

And so I want to say to the member, any way you can support us in this endeavour to stop a federal program here, a provincial program there, federal-provincial programs, and move to a system where we are providing a continuum of services, avoiding waste and duplication and overlap, then we can put limited financial resources into meaningful training and

employment programs for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I can support you to this extent at least right away. I too find Mr. Axworthy a disappointment.

Madam Minister, I think it's very worth while that we integrate as many programs as possible to eliminate the administration and the duplication. But that wasn't the direction my question was going to you.

I asked you, how many people have actually either received employment after going through the program, or how many people went on to some form of UI. Because there's only one taxpayer; and the taxpayer, whether they pay provincial taxes and support this program or pay federal taxes and support the UI program through their work, because tax money goes to support the UI as well as the UI premiums that the workers pay, so whoever it is that's paying the taxes is paying for either . . . on both of these programs.

So, Madam Minister, how many either received employment, or how many received UI after completing your programs?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well first let me say this, that unemployment insurance in this country is not tax supported. It's supported by workers and employers paying into the unemployment insurance scheme. It's not tax supported.

Now certainly social assistance programs in this country, training dollars that go into some of our technical schools and universities are tax supported through EPF (established programs financing), which is federal transfer payments, and provincial tax dollars. So I just wanted to clarify that for you.

Now just getting back to the difficulties that it . . . Sometimes there are impediments, federal impediments that make it difficult for provinces, particularly a province like ours which is basically enduring some fiscal hardship and we've had to cut, as you know, or reduce funding to many third-party organizations like technical schools, universities, municipalities and hospitals.

So what we have said to the federal government is that we have limited financial resources, you have limited financial resources; let's see if we can put some of our limited financial resources together to avoid overlap, duplication, and waste, and see whether we can deliver a program that makes sense. Because it is difficult for that person who may be on social assistance or on unemployment insurance, trying to make their way through federal programs, provincial programs, and federal-provincial programs. It's difficult when you're unemployed and looking for a way to get further training or employment and there are these host of programs; it is difficult.

In fact we have the federal government delivering some programs for social assistance recipients in this province. We have the province delivering programs

for social assistance recipients. We have the feds delivering programs for unemployed people, people on unemployment insurance. And what we're saying, is there a way that we could use, for instance, a New Careers Corporation which has the infrastructure in place all across the province; is there a way that we could use New Careers Corporation to start delivering federal, provincial, and federal-provincial programs in a single window? So that we have unemployed people who are either receiving unemployment insurance benefits or social assistance benefits, having to deal with one structure — a structure that would be helpful and not a hindrance.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, the work experience program had 360 client spaces. Now does that mean 360 clients actually utilized this program?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As I understand it, there are 360 spaces. We would have more than that begin the program. There's about a 20 per cent turnover. But 360 people would end the program.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, of the 360 people who completed the program, how many of them received employment after completion?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We could give you that information for 1993-94, but I can't give that to you today because the official doesn't have that information here. But I will table that information and give that information to you before the session ends.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Can you also provide me then with, for that 360 people, the number of people who returned to Social Services assistance?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — That will be difficult. We'll have to pick a particular date because people come onto and off of the program. But we will attempt to do that for you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'd appreciate that. Now I wonder if you could tell me, while you're doing your research, how many people completed your program, or the numbers that have started and went out of the program, how many of them ended up on UI after the program that they were in ended?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — That's a figure we could estimate; it's not a figure we could document. I mean this is one of the problems with unemployment insurance over in federal. This is a federal program; we're a provincial program, and these are . . . the questions you ask is basically one of the frustrations because we don't necessarily get that information because that's under federal jurisdiction. And that's why we're wanting to see if we could have a single window so we could track to see whether our programs are effective.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Will you try to provide me with those numbers? Thank

you. The minister says that she'll try to provide those.

Madam Minister, the same for the community employment program, has 1,250 spaces. How many people would have been . . . gone through that program in the last year?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I can attempt to give you the information for the community employment program that we're going to give you for the work experience program, if that's satisfactory.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, Madam Minister, you'll provide me with the same three kinds of information — jobs, social assistance, and UI? Minister says that she'll . . .

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I just want to make a point that New Careers Corporation is a very small organization and we have a very thin administration. You're asking us to take precious resources and put it into the answers to the questions. They may not come as quickly as you would like, but we will attempt to do that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. You mentioned that you have a small administrative staff there, but I also note that your small administrative staff gets \$1.4 million, according to the information you passed me today.

Madam Minister, when a person goes through your programs, I would almost think though that you would somehow track them afterwards. Because you have to wonder, what's the point of going through the training program if you take your 20 weeks on average and you go through and you come out at the end of the day, do your clients then just sort of wander off into the blue? You don't know whether or not your program is being at all effective? Whether there is any employers out there who will accept your trainees when they come out of the program, as having some valuable information?

How do you judge then, if you don't measure it in some manner, whether or not your program is providing a service of any value whatsoever? I find it surprising actually that you don't have some sort of record, some sort of tracking of the clients that go through the program. If it is indeed just simply a means to provide 20 weeks of employment for someone so that they can qualify for UI, then I guess there is no need to track them. Because as long as they get onto UI, then the program has fulfilled its purpose; they no longer are on the provincial welfare rolls and you're happy with that, I guess.

But I would think if you're really trying to provide some training and some worthwhile benefit to the clients that go through the program to enhance their lifestyle, then you would want to know whether or not your program is actually providing some benefit for them. So you would know, I would hope, at some point in time whether or not the clients that you service do receive some beneficial employment, some long-term employment, which this training has

provided them with some assistance for.

What type of tracking, what type of evaluations do you do to evaluate whether or not the program is providing the services that it is supposed to be providing?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We know that the New Careers Corporation has been restructured. We have tried to bring the various training programs that were in different parts of government under the umbrella of New Careers Corporation; not unlike what we're trying to convince the federal government to do. So we have moved the training and employment programs in Social Services over to New Careers Corporation.

We're in the process of discussing with other government departments the possibility of bringing a couple of more programs over, so that it will basically be the training and employment agency. All of those programs that government delivers, like vocational rehabilitation for disabled persons, will come under this corporation.

(1615)

You raise a good point about evaluation and tracking. And with the change of the mandate and the restructuring of the corporation by bringing all of these programs together, we are in the process of hiring someone who will do research and evaluation. You raise a very good point and it's a concern of the provincial government. We've had New Careers Corporation around for some time in the province and what we need to do is to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs. And that's why we're in the process of hiring someone who can give us the kind of information that you're talking about.

The committee reported progress.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 32 — An Act to amend The Labour Standards Act

Clause 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister. My colleague from Maple Creek will indeed be questioning you here shortly, but I wanted to ask a question first dealing with The Labour Standards Act and the SSTA. The SSTA felt that they were not properly consulted about this legislation before it was presented to the House.

They only found out about it by accident, Mr. Minister, when they attended another meeting, that indeed this type of legislation was coming forward to the House. And yet you've been informing my colleague that you made extensive consultations across this province and yet one of the major employers in this province with approximately 18,000 employees seems to have been left out.

Now they did get the opportunity to make a presentation to you but very shortly before the Bill was presented to the House, after all of the other major groups seem to have been consulted with. Why, Mr. Minister, was the SSTA left out of your consultations? Because they do have some very serious concerns throughout the whole Bill.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well I suppose there's a number of answers to that. Somebody's got to be first; somebody's got to be last.

They weren't last, but they were somewhere close to it in our list of people. That didn't in any sense reflect their importance, although I should point out that it is different for the SSTA. Teachers as an employee are not under labour standards, and so that whole group was outside the system.

Yes, I agree with the member from Morse; there is still a lot of people employed. It wasn't any attempt to exclude them. We had a list of people; we met them in no particular order. And we did, I may say, meet them before it was introduced. We had a lengthy session of about four hours before the legislation was introduced. Now they felt that insufficient and we met with them again afterwards. But they certainly got as much time . . . they certainly got their proportional share of our time. We met with as many people as we had time to meet and we did it as soon as we could.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, in all of the discussions we've had in relation to the Department of Labour and The Labour Standards Act, I'd like to know from you how many people you expect that this is going to benefit, and how you perceive the business community to react to the imposition of these labour standards, and how many jobs you're going to lose in relation to the business community. And we have had a great deal of representation from across this province.

It's my view, and the Minister of Finance has said on three specific budgets, that her focus is jobs. And I would say that if she's aware of it, she's conscious of the fact that jobs need to be created. But on the other hand, all of the other ministers turn around and jeopardize the opportunity for her to create jobs. So what you're doing, in my view, is you're counteracting all of the opportunity for employment that you could have in the province by the kinds of things you're doing through your Labour Standards Act.

We could go into The Trade Union Act; some of the other things too. But in Labour Standards, how many jobs do you think you're going to lose by the very fact that people have to move and cannot provide the services — or not services — opportunities in benefits to those employees who are part-time employees, for example. There is no way that any company is going to provide an employee who works less than 20 hours a week with an opportunity for benefits. There is no company in Saskatchewan that can do it; there is no company in Saskatchewan that will do it.

And how are you going to supply those benefits and then increase the cost of all of the fast food outlets in this province, all of those areas where people have made arrangements within their workplace to have offsetting times when they can job share, and they want to job share? How are you going to now say it's going to be done with . . . we're going to finish with this and those people are going to be off work?

We have almost 82,000 people on welfare and 12,000 less jobs. How much is that going to reflect on those numbers when you get this thing completed?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There isn't any evidence that there is going to be any loss of jobs. I do not regard the letters which have been read so eloquently by the member from Maple Creek as evidence of loss of jobs; that's evidence of concern. There isn't any evidence there's going to be any loss of jobs. And we think there's a rational argument for suggesting that this legislation will indeed assist in the creation of jobs through the revitalization of the economy.

It is our position that progressive labour laws are an essential part of economic restructuring, and restructure we must. It is apparent that the world is changing; it is apparent that we can no longer be hewers of wood and drawers of water and expect to enjoy the very high standard of living we do. We must build here a progressive, modern economy, composed of industries with high productivity and which make use of high technology.

We are not striving to create, as is apparently the position of the Liberal leader, we are not striving to create a low wage and therefore low productivity economy. That may be her view; that is not ours. Our view is, what we want to construct is a high productivity economy. This day and age, that generally means an increase in use of technology which contains both benefits and risks for employees. If employees are going to share in the risks of this brave new world, they should also receive a reasonable degree of protection. And in the broadest terms, that's what we're doing.

There's no evidence which has been put forward by the business community or by the members opposite there's going to be any loss of jobs.

Every time, since the abolition of slavery by the imperial parliament in England two centuries ago, every time anything was done for the ordinary person, economic ruin was predicted by forces of the right.

I said the other day in question period, you were wrong on the abolition of child labour; you were wrong when you said that with respect to The Occupational Health and Safety Act; you were wrong when you said that with respect to the Workers' Compensation Board. I don't know how many times Tories want to be wrong. I guess there's no limit to your enjoyment of this state. But you're going to be wrong with respect to Labour Standards Act, and you're going to be wrong with The Trade Union Act as well.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well it's like the story of the woman who saw her boy marching in the army, and her son was the only one out of step. And she said, isn't it interesting that everybody seems to be out of step with the music. And I think that's the way I think that you are acting at this point.

A letter from Flexi-Coil that we received indicated that their plans for possible expansion — and they have 1,100 employees in the city of Saskatoon and surrounding area and throughout the province, 1,100 people employed at Flexi-Coil. If they want to expand, will they expand in Saskatchewan with the kinds of the things that you're doing with Worker's Comp, labour standards, and with The Trade Union Act?

I doubt it, Mr. Minister, because they have said they would not because they cannot afford it. They're competing on an international market. They have to pay the wages that result in profit for the company. What's the matter with having a little profit? Isn't that good for the economy in the province of Saskatchewan so that it can grow and build and pay down their loans and their cost to the . . . so that they can benefit the people of Saskatchewan?

They have become a major supplier of manufactured agriculture machinery parts for John Deere and other companies, and now you're going to say to them, go find another place, go find United States to build in or go find a place in Alberta to build in rather than in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

And Terry Summach has made that observation to us and I'm sure he's made it to you. Why would you want to destroy an opportunity for an economic impact benefit to occur in Saskatchewan with something that we have traditionally done well — is manufacture short-line agriculture equipment? And you're going to say no to economic development and more jobs? You're going to say no to that because he can do it for less cost in Alberta or in Montana or in North Dakota than in can in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Minister, those are real, those are real across the board. And if you continue to do the things that you're going to do, they are going to do that. And that's why I asked you. The total volume of welfare will go up in the province and there's less people employed to pay for it. The total of people off work because of those things that you're doing will be increased and therefore there'll be more and more people who are struggling and struggling to eke out an employment. And that is the seriousness of the problem that we have here today.

And I don't believe you even consider that. I don't believe you have. And when the business community comes to us over and over and over again, you just stand there and glibly say they have no proof. Well their bottom line is beginning to be the proof.

Last Friday, I walked into a tire shop in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and at 5 o'clock in the afternoon the

employees had left and there were three of the owners in this tire shop. And I asked them one question. I said, what do you think of The Labour Standards Act? And they were so hostile, Mr. Minister, that if you would have been there fixing a tire, you wouldn't have got a tire fixed. Plain and simple. And so then I said to them . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I didn't agitate them at all; I just asked them one simple question.

(1630)

The next question I asked them, what do you think of the utility rates? And it was like the whole mountain kind of came spewing out of them. And that, Mr. Minister, is the feeling of resentment they have towards this.

Why do you want to split the labourer from the employer, the employee from the employer? Why do you want to divide that? You have said to us we are the ones that do it; go back to child labour.

Well, Mr. Minister, you have got your head in the sand if that's the only argument that you can bring forward to this House as to the reasons why you would put this Bill into this Assembly at this point in time.

When people are struggling, the very existence of their business is in jeopardy, and you say, I'm going to force them to increase the costs. And you've done it on every occasion. You did it on Workers' Comp. The day I walked into that same tire shop in January after the Liberal government put in the changes to the Workers' Compensation . . . to the unemployment insurance, there was that same anger there, Mr. Minister. That same anger was there, and that anger is there today as I have never in my life seen it before.

What are these people going to have to do? They're going to say, I can no longer afford to repair or be a small-business man in this community. I went . . . and just down the street, I went to see a friend of mine who is in my constituency, who runs a carpet store. He sells linoleums, carpets, flooring — all those kinds of things. And what did he say to me about this kind of thing? This, Mr. Minister, is the tip of the iceberg, and the iceberg is just beginning to roll over and they cannot afford it. They cannot afford it. You get out into the real world and see what's going on.

As a matter of fact, the day that you were in Swift Current I heard reports of that meeting. And they said, don't have that guy come back again because he was not only incapable of answering questions, he didn't even understand what he was doing there.

That is the report I got from numerous people about what you were doing in that community. You should have been able to say, I am prepared to defend the employer and the employee in providing jobs in the province of Saskatchewan, and you didn't do that, sir. And that is the kind of thing that you really need to begin to do. You cannot take and defend one position over another. And that's what you're doing, Mr. Minister.

And my question to you is, how are these small businesses going to survive — this husband, wife, children, family operation — how are they going to survive under the context of The Labour Standards Act that you have provided to this Assembly? Will you tell us that, and give them at least a little bit of hope about what their future has in this province?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Part of their concern, which I admit to be genuine, is because of the irresponsible campaign carried on by some business . . . by some lobbyists on behalf of the business community, and by some members of the opposition. The most irresponsible statements have been made about what we are doing — the most irresponsible statements.

Let us take the case of Flexi-Coil. What I understand them to have said is that this legislation could affect where we locate. Of course it could, but it might not.

I spent an hour and a half, almost two hours with them. When we were finished, they would have . . . I think they would have agreed that what we had discussed did not cause them any enormous concern.

What has happened since then is that various lobbyists and some members of the opposition, for the narrowest of partisan reasons, have made the most irresponsible statements about what this legislation contains. As the same people did last year with respect to workers' compensation, it was said the rates were going to go up by 200 and 300 per cent. We said they were going to go up by ten and one-half per cent, and on the average that's what they did.

I'll bet you one thing, Mr. Member, I'll bet they didn't . . . when you were there this year they didn't mention occupational health and safety, about which you were fanning the flames of fear last year. Those have been largely abated. And I'll bet you they didn't mention the Workers' Compensation Board rates, unless they happened to have had an increase because of a bad experience at their shop. But most business people agree that what we did was reasonable, fair, and balanced.

And as soon as the lobbyists find something else to do, and as soon as we have an opportunity to put this in place, I also believe they will say of this: it was fair, reasonable, and balanced.

You may spread what nonsense you want among the business community. You may tell them whatever you want to tell them, but at the end of the day you're going to be judged by the final product. And I don't mean this "you" in the sense the member from Morse, but I mean those who make irresponsible statements about this legislation, eventually they're going to be judged by it. And when it turns out to be a fair, reasonable, balanced approach, those who have made these outlandish statements are going to lose credibility as I think they did over their crazy comments about the cost of WCB (Workmen's Compensation Board) . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes indeed, they were.

Those who said the rates were going to up on an average of 200 and 300 per cent — you can't find them now. You can't find those people because they're ashamed of having made the comments. And some day, their comments on these Bills are also going to come back to haunt them . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, you may do so. I genuinely look forward to the member from Maple Creek getting back into this.

But their comments have been irresponsible and that's part of the reason for the concern. The end result of the legislation I do not think will cause them concern.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — I also received, Mr. Minister, a letter from Graham Construction which are located in Saskatoon. Graham Construction operates a large construction company. They also are saying, it's time to look some place else. It's time to look some place else, Mr. Minister.

There are those people who have been in business in this province for a long time. The Flexi-Coil family — they've been in business a long time in this province. They bought Friggstad out; Friggstad was in business a long time in this province. There are a whole lot of these people that are saying: I think it's time to move. How long is it before we can kick these guys out?

And, Mr. Minister, what they would prefer is that the jobs don't come out of their shops, the jobs come out of your shop. You lose your job. Because I believe that you are incompetent in dealing with this kind of legislation and putting it before the House at this time in the economic problems that the people of this province are facing.

They are very, very serious, Mr. Minister. The construction opportunities in this province are way down. If they have to go to Alberta already to bid, why don't they live there? If they have to go down into the United States to do their business, why don't they take the whole business and go down there? If Flexi-Coil wasn't connected with financing to the Government of Saskatchewan, they probably would move, Mr. Minister. That's as serious as it is. And that's the kind of thing that you have to be aware of.

And I stand here as a part of a community that is dying. They had 15,000-plus people and they're under 15,000 now. And they're a dying community with 15,000 people because of those kinds of services that are provided now — where? And from where? Out of Medicine Hat, Mr. Speaker. Over and over again these people are moving to Medicine Hat. They just built a brand-new mall there. Why is that? Because the opportunity to do business in Saskatchewan is getting tighter and tougher and harder to do all the time.

My question still hasn't been answered: how many more jobs are you going to have because of this Labour Standards Act? How many more? Because I personally believe that out of the 15,000 employed in the fast food industry alone you could have a third of

them lost, a third of those jobs lost and gone. Why and where? Because the kids that are working there today, that is the place where they have to have time to . . . before school, after school, dinner time, off hours, where they want to work and have some pin money. They're going to be gone, Mr. Minister.

They're going to be gone because those people don't have an opportunity to put them into place in delivering that service to the community. And that is serious business, Mr. Minister. In my community, that is serious. It may not be in Regina. It may not be in your constituency, but it is in mine. And that's serious problems.

Put those kids on welfare, put those young people out of school on welfare instead. Eighty-two thousand people and going up, on welfare. That's a cost. That's the cost of your legislation. And it will go up, Mr. Minister. If half of those people apply for welfare — attached to that 82,000, that's 85 — by the end of the year you could be approaching 90,000 people on welfare. And that is serious stuff, Mr. Minister. And that's what we have to deal with.

The taxpayers are getting fewer and fewer, and they're getting more tired and more tired all the time in carrying that load. And you have to be held accountable for that, and we're going to do that because we don't think you're doing the right thing. It isn't labour against management, employer against employee. Somebody's got to pay the bills. And if the bills are no longer being paid, then what's the purpose of staying here?

That's the question they're asking me, and I'm directing that to you: why would you stay here if you were in the red and not in the black? Why would you stay here and do that?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There are a great many reasons why a person would want to do business in Saskatchewan. I want to say the behaviour of the former government is not one of them — of which the member was a front-bencher. The behaviour of the former government in conducting the public affairs of this province is certainly not one of the reasons why you'd want to do business here. You have to look a long way to find an administration which so mismanaged its affairs as the former administration.

With respect to the issue under debate — as distinct from an issue which is ever present in people's minds, which is the former government's record — with respect to the matter under debate, we did a scientific study which suggested the macro costs are minuscule. Those who oppose it have nothing but rhetoric, nothing but empty, hollow breaths. They're just that. And I truly believe you're going to be judged by them.

We have approached this in a competent, professional, scientific fashion. We got our study done by Price Waterhouse. You have provided nothing except bald assertions that there's going to be widespread unemployment. And the member just doesn't have any evidence to support it nor is there

any rational analysis which will support that. And history suggests it's bunk.

So I guess when you ask me where I'm coming from, I'm coming from a study done by Price Waterhouse. Where are you coming from?

Mr. Martens: — I asked you the question, how many more jobs are you going to create because of this legislation?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Its primary purpose is not to create jobs, nor should it be judged on that basis. It's a little like asking the member opposite how many orthopedic operations are you going to perform today? I don't think you're going to perform any, because that's not what you're about.

Well this legislation is not about creating more jobs. It's about justice. It is about people who have no protection, who live at the whim of their employer, most of whom are fair-minded people but some of whom are not. It is about justice and compassion, and it is about restructuring this society so that we may take our place in the future which is coming up.

Having said all of that, there is no evidence it's going to destroy jobs and there is a rational analysis which I gave you a moment ago which suggests it's an integral part of restructuring.

I just ask the member to look around the world at those industries . . . at those societies which are thriving. They're not the societies which have feeble labour laws and feeble protection for workers. By and large societies which are thriving are those which treat workers with dignity and respect. And that is the group we want to join. We do not have any interest in joining low-wage, low-productivity societies which apparently is what the Liberal member has in mind. That's her goal; that's not ours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — I ask for leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

(1645)

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm about to introduce some guests that I don't know and I'm doing it on behalf of someone who doesn't have a venue to do it. Our page, Daryl Beadnell, has with us in the gallery today his wife, Evelyn, and their two children, Tandrell and Adrienne, watching the proceedings here today.

So on behalf of our page, Daryl, I'd like to welcome his wife and two children here today. So if you'd join with me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too want to welcome our page's family to the Assembly and hope they enjoy themselves here today.

An Hon. Member: — He doesn't get to sit around all the time.

Mr. Martens: — No, his job responsibilities make him do a little bit of work once in a while besides just sitting.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No 32 (continued)

Clause 1

Mr. Martens: — In the instance of a very major meat packing firm in the province of Saskatchewan, Intercontinental Packers, they have a facility that they purchased in Moose Jaw which is not being operated at this point. They have had serious labour problems in that facility. And I believe that they will keep that thing closed until there is an opportunity to earn a living and earn a profit from that facility, and it will stay shut until that happens.

Do you know what they're competing with, Mr. Minister? They're competing with higher interest rates with the United States; they're competing in an international market where they have to deliver goods and services to that international market on the basis of the labour that is being provided in that place.

In Alberta they provide that labour at about \$10 an hour. In Saskatchewan, they're looking for 10.50, competing with huge facilities in the United States that can run anywhere from 5 to \$8 an hour.

That, Mr. Minister, is what they're competing with. We have an international market that we're competing with, and we cannot do this in isolation. And that facility is not going to open in Moose Jaw until that has rationalized itself. And it isn't going to make any difference what you do or any of the members across the way do. It isn't going to change until that happens. And that, Mr. Minister, is a fact.

The second point I want to make to you is this. Flexi-Coil is in the same position when it comes to establishing a larger facility within Saskatoon. Or do they move it some place else where they can provide the same workmanship and the same quality standards, the same delivery at what? — lower interest rates and lower costs of production to give them a profit.

Will they do that in Saskatchewan under these circumstances? If Intercontinental Packers can't do that in Moose Jaw, then why would Flexi-Coil venture an opportunity to do that in Saskatchewan? Why? And I don't need a big amount of studies to say to me that the reason they're not opening in Moose Jaw is because they can't make a profit out of it. They can't under the circumstances that exist there today.

Whether they're locked out, whether they're on strike, or whatever the situation is there, they will not go back to work.

Think about the impact in Moose Jaw. Joyners shuts down, there's a hardware store shutting down, Woolco is shutting down. At least four major businesses in Moose Jaw are closing down, Mr. Minister. Why is that?

One of the reasons could be maybe that Intercontinental Packers can't have a factory processing meat in the province of Saskatchewan in Moose Jaw because the employee costs and all of the other costs that you have placed on them are too high. They are too high, Mr. Minister. The costs of doing business, whether it's interest, whether it's utility costs . . . and there's lots of costs there that are extremely high.

And I want to know from you, Mr. Minister, how those people in Moose Jaw can get a job back in Saskatchewan, because they won't be able to do it. Tell me where they're going to go.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I have talked to a large number of people about the strike at the Western Canada meat plant. It is a regrettable affair. Everyone would like to resolve it. As I say, I've talked to hundreds of people. You are the first person I ever met who thought that that strike had anything to do with The Labour Standards Act.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, it makes my point about the increased costs of doing business in this province because of the things that you're doing in relation to labour and the decision that you're making as it relates to Workers' Compensation, occupational health and safety — you brought up those issues — as it relates to The Labour Standards Act and as it relates to The Trade Union Act. You tell me how they're going to be able to increase their productivity with no work.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — This Bill is not going to increase their costs so far as I can see. If you think it will, you might be a little bit more specific than simply making bald assertions.

Mr. Martens: — Okay, I'll go to another point of view. You're not going to answer the question anyway.

Have you asked any of the people who will provide benefits to those part-time workers, have you asked any of the agencies that provide opportunity for those benefits to be supplied to the workers, have you asked any of those companies to give you an assurance that you will be able to provide a benefit equivalent to a full-time staff for those part-time employees? Have you asked any agency, insurance company, or whoever, to provide you with that documentation?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, we've had extensive discussions with them and there are a variety of ways that it might be done. If the member wants to enter into a more specific discussion of that, I'd be happy to do so.

We have had extensive discussions and there are a variety of ways it might be done. And there are a variety of ways it's currently being done by more enlightened employers.

Mr. Martens: — I have a small business in my community. It's a farm implement dealership; he's got about 30 employees. London Life supplies his benefits to his employees. London Life will not supply anybody under 20 hours, will they? Have they given you assurance that anyone under 20 hours a week will be able to be supplied with benefits?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — We've had discussions with a number of insurance companies who are quite interested in getting into this, which they see to be a growing field. And so I think the insurance companies are actually interested in the business. They're interested in providing it, recognizing that there may be some limitations with respect to some benefits.

But in fact our impression has been the exact opposite. Insurance companies are interested in what we're doing. They see it as a leading edge in Canada. And many of them, as soon as the Bill was tabled, many of them contacted us, wanted information. Why? Because they see this as the wave of the future and they want to be ready for it and they want to provide these services. And they will.

There's one thing about the business community which I would readily admit — it is that the profit motive induces considerable flexibility of mind and imagination. If there's a market, somebody there is going to supply it, and they admit they want to be the people to supply it.

So yes, we have had extensive discussions with them. And it's being done now by some more enlightened employers. I'm not sure I want to discuss individual names. Having made the comment, I'm not sure I want to raise individual businesses here. But there are businesses who make extensive use of part-time workers, who give the part-time workers benefits on a prorated basis.

It's being done now. This is not something off the moon. It's something that's being done here and now by some enlightened employers. And I, while I'll discuss the generalities of it, I won't mention names. But if you want, I'll discuss the generalities of how it's done.

Mr. Martens: — Well, Mr. Minister, members of my family are in this business and the lowest that they will go is 17 hours at this point, and that is very, very difficult to control. And I want to know from you how you're going to deal with those kinds of problems that I have clearly identified as a major problem because no one will sell that to them.

And here is where the hook is, Mr. Minister. They may be able to provide it, but at what cost? And who's going to pay that cost? Will the employee pay a portion of that cost? And if the employee must pay a

portion of that cost, then it becomes something that he should perhaps have the ability to choose whether he wants to do that or not.

If a young adult, 16, 17, or 18 years old, works at McDonald's and has an opportunity to get these benefits and works 15 hours a week, that cost is going to be so high to that individual that he will in no way be able to work and pay the benefits of that. And is that the reason why you want to have it? So that you can pull all the money in another form of taxation into the opportunity for the government?

And that, Mr. Minister, is where these people lose their jobs. They can't afford to work part-time because they cannot afford the benefits. You've got a curve that goes just about straight up when it comes to those businesses and the costs of doing business with those employees and employers who will have that kind of a work schedule. If it's 18 or 20 hours, it's going to be very, very difficult for these individuals to pay for those costs. And those costs are the costs that we're talking about.

When the employer is asked to pay for those costs, is he going to deliver that? He will say no. No, Mr. Minister, I am not going to do that. And I believe that when you come to the end of the day, those insurance companies will say yes, we will cover that.

At what cost is it going to be — \$2 an hour for that individual to have to pay when he's earning \$5.50? And that young person will say no, I'm not going to have anything to do with that because I'm paying more for my benefits than they're worth.

And that, Mr. Minister, is exactly what the problem is. And that is going to happen over and over and over again. And they might be interested in doing business with these companies, but my question is: have you discussed the cost in relation to the volume of benefit that the individual will get; and the cost of him in relation to the hours, the pay he gets per hour? Have you ever considered those relationships?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, we have. And the information we have received from both brokers and insurance companies is the opposite of what the member assumes, and that is that some of these benefits can be provided on a prorated basis.

Let us be honest about this. There are some benefits that can't be prorated, and that's admitted. And that's why much of this was left to regulation. We need to work with the insurance industry, with the business community, and with the workers who are involved, to work out what can reasonably be done.

There are some benefits which cannot be prorated. Let me give you an obvious . . . I'm going to make this comment and then I'm going to adjourn the committee.

An Hon. Member: — All right, because I've got some more.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well we'll get back to it another day; I'll look forward to that.

Some benefits cannot be prorated. Let me give you an obvious example — unemployment insurance. It's wholly within the jurisdiction of the federal government and there's nothing we can do about it, and that's outside the system.

But many of the benefits which are provided from private insurance companies — our information in talking to brokers and insurance companies is they can be prorated on a basis that's fairly reasonable and doesn't add a whole lot of additional cost.

The legislation makes provision for another option and that is that employees might choose from benefits, a package of benefits — they may take one or more. There is more than one employer now that in fact does that.

An Hon. Member: — And it raises the cost.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well more than one employer does it. And while I don't feel free to name them, I can assure the member that these are some of the more successful in the industry that do this. What there is not is any evidence that poor . . . there is no evidence to suggest what the Liberal member suggested in question period, which I still take serious objection to, and that is that ratcheting down wages and ratcheting down benefits is good for the economy. Most of the employers I have met who do provide benefits are some of the more successful ones. Why? Because they've got a loyal and dedicated group of employees.

Members, with that, I'm going to move the committee rise, report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:01 p.m.