

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 29, 1979

Time: 8:00 p.m.

BILL NO. 26 — INTERIM SUPPLY

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable First Minister.

MR. LYON: Mr. Speaker, I think we had reached that point where we were talking about the January conference on grain handling and transportation, some of the things that emerged from that communique. And I think I had read to the Leader of the Opposition from the communique, page 4, indicating that the participants in the conference actually discussed the implications of railways receiving adequate compensation for the movement of grain and in turn the reciprocal obligations of the railways were noted. He seems to have such a concern, a recently acquired concern, I must say, Mr. Speaker, about matters of this sort that I thought I should read that to him so he would know that there was a genuine concern among all the participants to try to resolve the global matter or to come to some answers and some resolution to some of the problems of a global matter which have afflicted the grain industry for many, many years. And what was it he said again, Mr. Speaker, in his comments to the House the other day? I think I mentioned them before. He was quoting from news columns even though he had had read to him by the House leader the five points that had been made by Manitoba. What was it he was saying? You're permitting the members across the way to prepare a little sweetener for the CPR. I want to relieve the plight of the CPR. I want to relieve the plight of the CPR. Does any member across the way deny that their First Minister has indicated that their concern is to relieve the plight of the CPR as far as the crowrate policies are concerned? The First Minister indicated we want to see the producer protected. That sounds nice. We want to see the producer protected, he says, but at the same time we have to acknowledge that until something happens to relieve the railways we want to relieve the railways. Yes, the First Minister and his treasury bench and his colleagues says the Leader of the Opposition, from rural areas in this province are more interested in relieving the railways, the CPR, than they are in relieving the plight of western farmers that are producing grain.

You know, Mr. Speaker, that's a bit disappointing, a bit disappointing, because my honourable friend, who is not here tonight, will find after he's been in this House and after he's been in this business a bit longer that if he wants to be a successful Leader of the Opposition which is a title that he has yet to claim in his own right, and if more importantly he wants to transform himself from being Leader of the Opposition to this side of the House, he's going to find that the cheap shot and the quick trick don't work and that kind of cheap shottery and that kind of quick trickery that we heard him mutter the other day is going to knock him down, I can tell him right now, about 4 or 5 notches in the estimation of people in this province who are genuinely concerned about grain handling and transportation, people by the way who were not represented by any of his members across the way. None of them, not one of them.

But the producers of this province, the genuine, legitimate grain farmers of this province, look upon that kind of quick trickery and cheap shottery and they'll make a judgment. And I can tell them that they will, Mr. Speaker, — I'm not a farmer, I'm a lawyer by training and so on, but I'm sprung from those people who have farmed for three or four generations, one, two or three, whatever, in this province. I know how they think and I know how they judge their political leaders. I give a little bit of free advice to my friend, the Member for Selkirk, to say that that kind of cheap shot isn't going to get him anywhere with the farm community in this province. I happen to know that community an awful lot better than he does.

I daresay that some of the other Premiers know that community reasonably well because, you know, when the Premier of Saskatchewan was speaking here in January, we were just talking about the January Conference of Grain Handling and Transportation, the Premier of Saskatchewan made an opening statement to that conference which was released to the press — it's on the public record — and here's what he said — it's unfortunate that the Honourable Member for Selkirk isn't here tonight to hear what one of his doctrinaire colleagues said in January about grain handling and transportation in the western region. I quote from Page 10 of the opening statement of the Honourable Allan Blakeney, Premier of Saskatchewan: "We agree that the railway should receive

adequate compensation for the movement of grain, a compensatory rate which includes an appropriate return on investment. They should then be held fully responsible for providing adequate service, obtaining their own capital, providing the necessary system improvements, as is any other business."

Then he goes on to delineate — that's the end of the quote — he goes on to delineate Saskatchewan's prorata guarantee crowrate guarantee plan, which we have all heard of before. The Premier of Saskatchewan has no problem talking about it. He said: "This leads me to our next proposal, the crowrate guarantee plan. Saskatchewan believes that the railway should be provided with a compensatory rate for the movement of grain and then should be held fully responsible for capital improvements necessary to ensure adequate service." Mr. Speeær, that wasn't the Premier of Manitoba cowering to the CPR; that was the socialist Premier of Saskatchewan talking here in January about the real problem that faces the producers of western Canada. If the Member for Selkirk wants to ascribe to the present Premier of Manitoba those motivations that he did describe on Monday or Tuesday of this week when, let the record show, I was not here to answer because I was out at the conference. I wasn't here to answer him; the Leader of the House had to answer him. Well, then let him ascribe the same low motives to the Premier of Saskatchewan who made those quoted statements last January.

I'm merely trying to tell my honourable friends that the current times have passed them by and to find out what the grain handling and transportation system in Manitoba and in Canada is all about, my honourable friend better get up to date. He had better talk to some of his own kissing cousins in the Socialist Party to find out what it is all about. And then, after that, one would hope that he would be a bit more responsible in talking about — in full context, yes — I have no hesitation at all because the crowrate, guarantee plan, that Mr. Blakeney then went on to describe is one that I said the other day should be considered in the course of the Task Force Review. Mr. Blakeney went on to say, "Who is to pay the railways the compensatory rate? " Imagine that coming from a Socialist, eh? Who is to pay the compensatory rate? And I quote again, "Our proposal, " says the Premier of Saskatchewan in January, "would retain the present statutory rate, the crowrate, to the producers. The Federal Government in the national interest would pay the railways the difference in revenue between the crowrate and the compensatory rate for the movement of grain." He's already got a plan worked out.

"Saskatchewan, for its part," says he, "would relieve the burden on the transportation system for grain by assisting in the development of industries which take grain out of the system and process it into value-added and weight-reduced products before shipment." That's the Premier of Saskatchewan, the NDP Premier of Saskatchewan, talking about one proposal for compensatory rates. He doesn't seem to find any problem in talking about compensatory rates. He doesn't seem to find any problem in analyzing the situation.

And by the way, while the Member for Lac du Bonnet is here, I should tell him that — he asked me some time ago whether or not there have been any impact studies on the question of statutory grain rates by the present government. I would like to inform the Member for Lac du Bonnet that the Department of Agriculture has contracted with the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Manitoba to undertake a study to investigate the implications of any changes in statutory freight rates to farmers in the Manitoba economy, and we hope that that study is going to be available to us by September of this year. After saying that, Mr. Speaker, I have to tell my honourable friend something that he already knows, that his government, when it was in office, was so blind and so late getting off the mark on this situation that they hadn't commissioned any study at all, and yet he had the nerve to stand up in this House and ask us whether any study had been prepared. His government forbade the preparation of any study because they wouldn't even look at it. They had their ostrich heads in the sand. They wouldn't even look at it, didn't even know what the implications are. "Don't confuse us with the facts," said the Member for Lac du Bonnet when he was Minister of Agriculture, not representing one-tenth of the producing farmers of this Manitoba in thought, ideal, or anything at all and that's why he's sitting over on that side of the House now.

The position of the previous government was that the statutory grain rates were inviolate. They couldn't even be looked at. No studies examining the impact of changes to those rates were approved by the former members opposite. They wanted to live along in their blissful ignorance and pay homage to their shibboleths and not pay any attention to what was happening in the export grain market in this world to serve the farmers that they were here to represent.

So we have that study under way, just as Saskatchewan has had the study under way to find out what is happening. Did my honourable friend, the Member for Lac du Bonnet, never avail himself of the opportunity of talking to the President of the United Grain Growers when he was Minister of Agriculture? Did he ever avail himself of the opportunity of talking to the President of the Manitoba Pool when he was the Minister of Agriculture? I doubt that very much. And between those two

gentlemen, I daresay they represent more producers of grain in this province than any one collection of my honourable friends on that side of the House ever will or ever could.

A MEMBER: He talked to Roy Atkinson.

MR. LYON: He talked to his Socialist friend, Atkinson, probably and Red Bill Janssen, yes. He talked to that lot. —(Interjection)— No, no, we know all your Marxist friends. —(Interjections)— I'm not sitting down for him.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet with a matter of privilege.

MR. SAMUEL USKIW: The privilege is, Mr. Speaker, that the former Deputy Minister of Agriculture is not here to challenge my honourable friend and it's awfully low and cheap of my honourable friend to take pot shots at a person that cannot be here to debate with him.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, order please, order please. May I suggest to the Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet that questions of privilege have to be substantiated by a substantive motion, and having failed to provide a substantive motion he had no point of privilege. The Honourable First Minister.

MR. LYON: Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. May I point out to the honourable member that a Speaker's ruling cannot be questioned other than one specific way.

MR. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, I was merely going to ask for the floor to ask the Honourable First Minister a question.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable First Minister.

MR. LYON: Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend can have the floor for 40 minutes, as soon as I'm through. In fact, we would love him to have the floor when I am through. And if he's at all sensitive about the former Deputy Minister of Agriculture —(Interjection)— It will take a better part of at least two terms of this government to erase some of the damage that was done to the farming community by that unholy alliance between my honourable friends and some of their Marxist employees that they brought into government in their time, and it will take a long time to erase that record. And if my honourable friend wants to move around the Province of Manitoba, let him start first of all with the beef growers and ask them what they thought of him as Deputy Minister of Agriculture. And he can go on down every farm organization in this province. —(Interjections)—

My honourable friend doesn't like quotes. He doesn't like the vote that put him on that side of the House and it's going to keep him there for a long time, and he didn't like the vote on his attempt to take control of the beef industry in Manitoba, because that vote told him that the farmers of Manitoba told him and his Deputy to turn tail by 77 percent and to go and peddle their Socialist policies somewhere else. That's what that vote told them.

If my honourable friend wants to continue, there is lots more I can tell them about what happened when he was Minister. We know; we know, we're cleaning it up. We're cleaning it up. And as Senator Kennedy said in that inelegant phrase, you know, "Cleaning up after an elephant isn't an easy job and you can't do it with a teaspoon", and we know; we know.

Well, Mr. Speaker, just to let my honourable friends know some of the things that have been going on in the grain handling and transportation business. Those were some of the comments from Premier Blakeney, and may I say at this point, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier of Saskatchewan, the Premier of Alberta, the Premier of British Columbia and the present Premier of Manitoba, we tried to work in conjunction with one another on the problems that face us in the Western Premiers Conference and in other relationships that we have in exchanging ideas and views and I'm in no way criticizing the Premier of Saskatchewan when I make that quotation tonight. He was dealing with a problem that we all face and he was trying to state the position of Saskatchewan, indeed he had a proposal, a concrete proposal to put forward and I think there's some merit to that proposal; indeed mentioned, even though it's not in my speaking notes, mentioned the other day that the proposal that had been made by Saskatchewan was one that any task force should have a very close look at because it's probably, except for the second part of it where you get into provincial subsidies on different grains, it's probably getting close to the point of what we have to arrive at

if we're going to see some improvement with respect to the rate situation which impacts on other situations in the whole complex of problems that beset grain handling and transportation.

Well, now that was the January meeting. Long prior to the First Ministers Conference in November which I referred to earlier, Mr. Speaker, there had been public statements made in this province and elsewhere by leaders of the grain community, and I made reference to this in my opening remarks the other day in Prince George, about the whole spate of problems afflicting grain handling and transportation and also about the question of rates, because rates is one of those problems. It's not the overall one, but it's one of them, you have to talk about them, you can't be like that ostrich that I talked about before and bury your head because if you do you're not going to do any service for the people of Manitoba who are in the grain producing business.

Sure, you've got to talk about it and, Mr. Speaker, at the conference in Prince George the other day — I distributed today a copy of the speaking notes that I used at that time, my honourable friend doesn't have to resort to news clippings or anything of that sort — here are the actual speaking notes that were used. Yes, well, my honourable friend may, I'm sure that the comment I just gave him from the Premier of Saskatchewan is very revealing to him because I don't think he's done his homework. I don't think he's up-to-date on what's going on. If he wants to accuse this Premier, or his temporary Leader wants to accuse this Premier of cowering to the CPR, then he'd better start talking to Mr. Blakeney because that sounded very much as though Mr. Blakeney was concerned about compensatory rates and the whole question being discovered. So as I said to my honourable friend and I think he may appreciate it, he's here, cheap shots don't work in this business. Quick tricks don't work. You're dealing with a very crucial subject and the farmers of this province demand nothing less than a bit of leadership from their government in resolving the whole problem. And if my honourable friend thinks that he can cadge a couple of days headlines and make himself feel pretty good about that, don't think that he's going to win the farm vote from that because they know the problem goes much deeper than a couple of days headlines.

It's a pretty serious problem and if we don't meet it, Canada is going to be the poorer. Western Canadian agriculture is going to be the poorer and those who were making the cheap shots at the time are going to be the ones that the farmers will turn to and say; "Where were you when the decisions had to be made?" Except making cheap shots.

So, Mr. Speaker, those who are trying to do something about this in a constructive way — and it's interesting that in among the four Premiers, you've got a Social Creditor, you've got two Conservatives, and you've got one NDPer. I think that all four of those people are trying to do something constructive about this problem, and the fact that the proposal that we put forward isn't accepted by them, that doesn't bother me in particular at all, because as long as we continue the momentum that developed from the January Conference, that's what's important because the problem as we face it today, is an intolerable one for the producers. They've got to have more facilities put into place, to deliver the grain to market. And that involves a whole myriad of industries, and a whole myriad of problems, amongst which one, as I've said before, is rates.

And you've got to talk about rates. And while you're talking about them you can say, as I said the other day, and I'll read this into the record, Mr. Speaker, Page 9 of the submission. "I believe we have a clearer understanding now of the key role, the cost revenue shortfall experienced by the railways plays in the inadequacies of our grain transportation system." And jumping on a paragraph or two, "There is agreement that the Crow rate has allowed western agriculture to expand and prosper. It has permitted the farmer to stabilize a portion of the costs he faces. During the ups and downs of the agricultural cycle the Crow rate has remained constant. Over the decades the western farmer has enjoyed the benefits of the Crow, and I maintain, that in no way can the farmers of Western Canada be expected to give up those benefits unless it can be demonstrated that a superior system will result for them. And all of those benefits, as well as any detriment of the statutory rates must be specifically identified so that we know what we stand to gain and lose, and any discussions of compensatory rates. Westerners continue to pay for protection of eastern industries by tariffs and other economic disadvantages. No study of compensatory rates can overlook these traditional disadvantages, which have afflicted the western economy since Confederation." If there is anything in there that my honourable friend disagrees with, he better stand up on his hind legs after I've finished and tell us. But I tell him right now, and I tell him again, that by burying his head in the sand and trying to take cheap shots at the CPR, he isn't going to help the problem any at all. He should know that by now.

Here is a man who held the job of Minister of Agriculture for quite a long while. The farmer in Manitoba wants to know what kind of help he's going to get. Not what kind of cheap shots he's going to get from politicians, who a day after the federal election is announced, are trying to help their confrere get elected in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and so on. And all the help he is giving to the socialist, Mr. Speaker, in this province, will be like a snowball in hell, if he keeps on using the same tactics because the farmers aren't going to be bought by that cheap

Mr. Speaker, as I said this afternoon, I referred again on Page 14 to the concept of the Task Force, which had been promoted by the Honourable Otto Lang in some correspondence we'd had. Mr. Lang, when the Western Provinces declined to participate in a narrow gauge study on the purchase of further hopper cars, which would have involved the provinces for the first time, engaging the taxpayers money of the Province of Manitoba, in transportation rolling equipment for the railways — for the railways, I stress. When he found that there was no agreement to proceed with that, he wrote to us on the 27th of February and asked us to join in the study which would, "include the broad issues of the needs of the whole system and to make sure that any solution binds the railways to provide good service." And that kind of broader view is available for my honourable friends to consult upon any time they wish. That is why we suggested picking up Mr. Lang's idea that there be a task force whose objective would be, "to develop policy guidelines to enable Canadian grain handling and transportation systems to meet present and future market demands."

And then on the next page we suggested that there be — and this was not an exhaustive list at all — the following issues might be discussed.

"Number One: Whether a system of compensatory rates is required to assure a contemporary and efficient system for transporting grain products and, if s, what alternative methods should be considered for such compensation."

I don't notice too much difference between those words, Mr. Speaker, and the words spoken by the Premier of Saskatchewan in January.

"Number Two: Regardless of the system or level of compensation, should not the benefits to western Canadian producers of current statutory rates be retained in their entirety?"

Anything there about abandoning the Crow rate? Not a thing at all, no.

"Number Three: If compensatory rates are paid, should not railways then be held fully responsible for providing adequate service, obtaining their own capital for providing necessary system and rolling stock improvements?"

Isn't that exactly what Mr. Blakeney was saying last January in Winnipeg? Anything there that's a sell-out to the CPR, I ask my honourable friend.

"Number Four: Alternative methods for co-ordinating the movement of grain from the prairies to domestic and export markets, including consideration of highway transport and road-strengthening programs and related effects of branch-line abandonment."

Anything wrong with looking at that, how you can improve rail and road transportation with respect to the whole industry? I don't see any sell-out there to the CPR or to anybody else, Mr. Speaker. I see a genuine attempt by governments to try to solve a real problem.

"Number Five: Alternative strategies for the co-ordination and integration of federal, provincial and industry efforts to rationalize, strengthen and develop the processing of indigenous crops in western Canada."

Does my honourable friend or the so-called "agriculturalists" opposite, have they got any objection to having value-added production go on in Manitoba, or processing? If so, let them stand up and tell us, because there are an awful lot of people in this province who want to see more processing of our natural products take place in this province. And I think that that deserves to be looked at in any ongoing study. —(Interjection)—

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Inkster mentioned some of the more dismal of the failures that he presided over. I rather tend to think in terms of Carnation Foods, Campbell's operation at Portage, the McCain operation, Simplot. You know, the ones that know how to run a business and who know how to create jobs, to process natural products, and, at the same time, not remain a drag on the Treasury, such as all of my honourable friends corporations were. —(Interjection)—

Well, Mr. Speaker, if my honourable friend, the Member for Selkirk . . . The Member for Selkirk, who isn't here, of course, but he was around long enough to take the cheap shots on Monday or Tuesday, but he is not here to hear the reply, which I say for the record, Mr. Speaker, and I say to the farm community of Manitoba, is perhaps an indication of the depth of concern that the Member for Selkirk really has about the grain farmers of Manitoba. He is not even here.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I really don't think that it's necessary to alify much more upon the situation, which is understood by all of those who want to understand it. It won't be understood by politicians who are trying to make a quick trick on it. But I ask my honourable friends — in fact I suggest to my honourable friends — that they get on side on this issue and they get on side pretty fast, because there is no more crucial issue facing the agricultural producers of western Canada than the grain handling and transportation system at this moment. And that reflects on our economy, because agriculture — and my honourable friends never seem to realize it — agriculture is the backbone of Manitoba's economy and it's going to remain that way for a long time. So I say to my honourable friends it's about time that they get on side and get up to date, and get their heads out of the sand and find out what's going on in the real live world instead of talking to some of

the people who give them bad advice that obviously they have been talking to.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time that my honourable friends are concerned about rate structure, as indeed everyone is, and while we want to preserve the benefits of that statutory rate structure for the people of Manitoba and western Canada, we can't be unaware of the fact that the federal government, by a series of band-aid policies using the taxpayers' dollar, has been moving in and picking up the slack trying to patch this system together to make it work a little bit better. And that's why we have got all involved in it and have to rationalize it and improve upon it.

My honourable friends would seem to be unaware of the fact that the federal government, using taxpayers' dollars, have purchased 8,000 hopper cars at a cost of \$256 million. Some of those hopper cars actually went to the C.P. and the C.N. Can you imagine that? Because they're the only two railways in Canada.

At the same time, the federal government, with taxpayers' dollars, in engaging in a boxcar repair program to the extent of \$10 million — some of that work being done in the Transcona Shops.

At the same time, there are branch-line subsidies to upgrade the level of branch lines in western Canada, which have been allowed to go down, of \$435 million between 1971 and 1977.

At the same time, there are rail-line rehabilitation grants that have been paid in the tune of \$175 million by the federal government out of federal taxpayers' — and that includes western producers — pockets, as well, from 1977 to 1979, and a further amount of \$525 million has been committed by the federal government out of taxpayers' dollars from 1980 to 1986.

That's what's happening in the real world of federal subsidies to the rail-line system in Canada today, and it's by coming to grips with some of the problems and some of the subsidy programs of mammoth size — of mammoth size — that I have just mentioned that you then come to understand that the whole gamut of this problem must be looked at if we are to bring some order and some measure of greater efficiency to this delivery system for the benefit of all farmers in western Canada.

And let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, that all of the time that my honourable friends sit opposite nibbling and mumbling away about this or that, that the farmers of western Canada last year lost a minimum of \$350 million in frustrated grain sales; other figures are as high as \$500 million, because of the inadequate transport system that we have with all of those hundreds of millions of dollars that are being pumped into it out of the taxpayers' pocket, and that includes the taxpayers of Manitoba as well, because we have an unrationalized system.

There are major and there are minor problems in that system, Mr. Speaker. I received a telegram today from a concerned group of farmers from Hamiota, Manitoba and it reads as follows: "A meeting of farmers in Hamiota, Manitoba unanimously agree the poor rail efficiency due to Wheat Board controls is a serious problem in the movement of grain. We strongly recommend that control of grain transportation be taken from the Wheat Board and returned to the railways." I mention that merely as another example of the myriad of problems that affect this whole system.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be looking for alternatives for the grain handling system and this doesn't mean that we are going to give up the statutory grain rates in any way, shape or form, but we have got to be looking for alternatives in order to improve the present system. We must be absolutely certain that any alternatives that are examined will maintain the level of benefits that our farmers receive and will at the same time provide us with an efficient system which is able to move 30 million tons of grain to our export markets by 1985 because that is what the forecasts are.

So at the recent meeting, we were working to maintain, as I know the other Premiers were as well, the momentum of the Winnipeg conference, by looking at the outstanding issues in a comprehensive and an integrated manner, which underly the suggestions that were made at that conference by us and by other participants in it. The proposal that we made is obviously not the only way to proceed on this matter. We are going to proceed now with a meeting of western Ministers to hammer out a position and then to approach the Minister of Transport after the next election.

But in coming to this decision, the Premiers and the representatives who were there recognized the absolute need to maintain momentum. This is the right time to be into these discussions because time is running out. These are not time parameters that are set by the farmers, that are set by governments, these are time parameters that are being set by the marketplace. It was felt because of the complexity of the issues, that some form of review board had to look at this and to bring an answer quickly because we can't wait too much longer for the facilities to be put into place at Prince Rupert, facilities which I had the privilege of seeing yesterday with the Minister of Agriculture when we were taken over to Prince Rupert and given an opportunity on the water and by helicopter to see the sites there and before that, to have been taken around the port of Vancouver, I think as I mentioned earlier on Sunday, to see how those facilities are able to handle the grain situation.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are embarked on a program, the resolution of which is not going to be easy. There are many many potholes on the road to success in trying to rationalize and improve the grain transportation and handling system. This province will continue to make its contribution to those debates with the hope of seeing the momentum continued and of seeing progress made. But as I have said so often before, the provinces do not have jurisdiction. We can persuade; we can cajole; we can offer assistance here and there; we can prod; we can bring people together; we can try to take a statesmanlike view with respect to what is needed for the future because the problem is too big for narrow partisan politics to intrude themselves into it.

But we haven't the power jurisdictionally or constitutionally as a province to mandate or to pass a statute to say that this or that will be done. That is the role that the provinces have. It's a role in which they are somewhat fettered but it is a role in which I believe they can still do some measurable good in bringing about a resolution to the problem.

I say to my honourable friends tonight, Mr. Speaker, that the Government of Manitoba intends to continue that role and we will attempt to continue that role in the posture of trying to reach reasonable solutions to the problem by advancing ideas, by advancing proposals, some of which are going to be agreed upon, some of which are not going to be agreed upon, but all with the aim in view of trying to resolve some of the major problems in this field before 1985 is upon us and before the farmers of western Canada turn to their Premiers or turn to the government of the day and say, what have you been wrangling about in all of this time and you haven't built up a system that permits us to deliver the product to market? That's the nub of the point. The nub of the point is that we can do nothing less than what we are doing because the present situation is, Mr. Speaker, intolerable.

Well, I think little else need be said on that topic, Mr. Speaker, because the evidence is before the committee, as I tabled it today, with respect to the different statements that have been made and repetition does not improve the quality of an argument at all.

Mr. Speaker, the mention that was made in debate today of minimum wage when we were in Private Members' Hour at 4:30 reminds me of one statement again that my honourable friends seem to pass off as being a mark of the indolence or the cruelty or the hard-heartedness of this government because they continually say and their spokesmen say, well, you know, the minimum wage in Manitoba hasn't been changed since September 1, 1976 when they were in office. You know, Mr. Speaker, that is true, and they remained in office until October 27, 1977 and didn't change the minimum wage. We have been in office since October, 1977 and it hasn't been changed as yet but in that period, Mr. Speaker, let me give them a few other effective dates of minimum wages just so that they will have this on the record.

I'll read them right across because, you know, I hate to clutter my honourable friends' minds with facts but from time to time it is necessary to do it. These are as of February 15 and I don't think there are any more recent figures from the Department of Labour. The Federal Government changed the minimum wage on April 1, 1976 to \$2.90 for persons 17 years of age or over. The youth rate is \$2.65. That's April 1, 1976; that's even in advance of September 1, for the benefit of the Honourable Member for Elmwood.

Mr. Speaker, British Columbia changed its minimum wage on June 1, 1976 to \$3.00 for persons 18 years of age or over; \$2.60 for persons under 18 years of age.

Alberta changed its minimum wage last on March 1, 1977 to \$3.00 for persons 18 years of age and over; \$2.85 for persons less than 18; and \$2.50 for students under 18 employed part-time.

Saskatchewan changed its minimum wage June 30, 1978. It now stands at \$3.25.

Manitoba's last change, as I mentioned, was September 1, 1976. It has remained at \$2.95 for persons 18 years of age and over; \$2.70 for persons under 18.

Ontario changed January 1, 1979, the richest industrial province in Canada, to \$3.00, which is five cents more than the Manitoba minimum wage. —(Interjection)— My honourable friend from St. Boniface who seldom gets up now but who keeps muttering says, "And that makes it right?" It makes an awful lot of common sense. It makes an awful lot of common sense for Manitoba not to be ahead of the richest province in Canada. That's what makes an awful lot of common sense.

Quebec changed October 1, 1978 to \$3.37 for employees 18 years of age and over and then on April 1, 1979 it's going to go to \$3.47. And Quebec for persons under 18 years of age, on January 1, 1978 raised that rate to \$3.07. New Brunswick last changed their rate November 1, 1976 to \$2.80. Nova Scotia last changed their rate January 1, 1977 to \$2.75 for persons 18 years of age and over, \$2.50 for persons under 18. PEI, July 1, 1978, \$2.75 for persons 18 years of age and over, and \$2.40 for persons under 18. Newfoundland, January 1, 1976, imagine that, \$2.50 for persons 16 years of age and over. Northwest Territories, June 7, 1976, \$3.00 for persons 17 years of age and over, \$2.55 for persons under 17, in an area where I imagine most people would

acknowledge that the cost of living is higher and so on. Yukon Territories similiarly, April 1, 1976 changed to \$3.00 for persons 17 years of age and over.

So, Mr. Speaker, I put those figures on the record merely to indicate that Manitoba at \$2.95 is the 4th — as my honourable friends would put it, they being pessimists, the 4th lowest in Canada, that is true. But, it's right in among British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario — all at \$3.00, the Territories and the Yukon — all at \$3.00. It's five cents. You know, within five cents of being at a level of the three richest provinces in Canada.

So my honourable friends before they wept too many more phoney elephant tears on this topic and they are phoney and they are elephant tears — they're a crock of elephant tears to put a better expression on it. My honourable friends should just remind themselves, just remind themselves of those figures, of those comparative figures, how Manitoba compares — I'd say pretty favourably. And Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, is not going to drop to the lowest position in Canada nor is it going to become the leader in Canada in terms of minimum wage realizing the global effect that minimum wage has on the whole industrial and work community in this province. And so, my honourable friends I would suggest might abandon some of the elements of broader hypocrisy which have really characterized their statements on this, get down to business; look at the facts of life; remember that they weren't about to raise the minimum wage when they were in office for the same reasons — and I'm not ascribing motivations at all — but for the same reasons I suggest that the present government of Manitoba is not moving too quickly. We didn't want to get ahead of the pack. And that, Mr. Speaker, happens to be in the best long term public interest for the people of Manitoba and so long as it is that is the policy that will be followed and my honourable friends can try all they wish to evoke that perception among the people of Manitoba that they are the only ones who care for the downtrodden and so on. We've heard all that rot before. We've heard it all before and we know, Mr. Speaker, from whence it comes and what inspires it. Trying to take every position. Trying to be the traditional mugwump. You know, when they were in office they did nothing but now that we're in office we must do something. Well, you can't straddle those fences except with your mug in one side and your wump on the other too long before people begin to understand. And that's what a mugwump is and that's what my honourable friends' position is, mugwumpery with respect to the minimum wage in Manitoba.

Well, Mr. Speaker, very little else of substance was alluded to by the Leader of the Opposition when he made his remarks on Tuesday in this debate. My honourable friend the Member for Inkster gave us an interesting exhibition of grade 11 debating technique this afternoon in trying to draw the allegory of the two widows and so on and you know, that wouldn't even have won him a prize in grade 11. I was thinking of it over the dinner hour, you know. —(Interjection)— No, no, having no trouble. Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the Honourable Member for Burrows, I haven't had any trouble with anything that he has said since he's been in this House. So, Mr. Speaker, I think that I will leave my friends to stew in some of the juice of their own making because they really haven't said anything else that, as my honourable friend the Member for Inkster said today, that would indicate that they shouldn't vote for Supply.

The record of this government is one that we're proud of. We are not perfect. We have made mistakes from time to time and we will continue to make mistakes from time to time and I usually say that to my honourable friends just to let them know that we have no ideas of infallibility on this side of the House as they had when they occupied this side of the House. And I say further, Mr. Speaker, that the programs and the policies that are being carried out by this government represent the feeling of the vast majority of the people of Manitoba, notwithstanding the real or the stimulated complaints we hear from time to time from interest groups, some of which are close to my honourable friends, some of which are not close to them at all. But you can't govern a province, you can't undertake the responsibilities of government in a province on the basis of being pushed from one pressure group to another. You've got to set yorr course, as we have set our course, determine what that course is, as we have determined what that course is, and sail ahead, as we are sailing ahead. And you know, Mr. Speaker, when I listen to my honourable friends opposite I'm always reminded, I'm always reminded of that great old saying, the dogs bark but the caravan moves on, and this caravan of good government is moving on for the best of the people.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet. 8MR. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the First Minister a question. I would like him to clarify for me what he meant when he referred to the former Deputy Minister as "Red Bill Jansen".

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable First Minister.

MR. LYON: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that my honourable friend consult most of the farmers in Manitoba, they'll enlighten him.

MR. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, it's not the most pleasant thing to enter into a debate after that kind of commentary from the First Minister of this province who hasn't the gumption to make that same remark outside of this room, Mr. Speaker. He hasn't the intestinal fortitude to get outside of this Chamber and make that statement. —(Interjection)— Yeah, go ahead and make it. Talking about cheap shots, Mr. Speaker, the First Minister sits in the Chamber where he knows he's immune from the procedures of the courts of this province and he insults the people of this province who have worked for the people of this province for so long. Mr. Speaker, I say that not only because of the instance only a moment ago when the First Minister was on his feet, but because it has been repeated so many times by different members from the Conservative Party.

And not only have they harrassed this individual verbally, Mr. Speaker, but, Mr. Speaker, they have harrassed this individual in other provinces of Canada. Yes, Mr. Speaker, talk about Facism, or McCarthyism, yes, we have it in spades. In the Province of Saskatchewan, the Conservative opposition would like to know whether the former Deputy Minister from Manitoba, the deputy for Agriculture, is working for the Saskatchewan government. Every now and then it becomes a question in the Assembly in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in the House of Commons, it's a Conservative Member of Parliament that wants to know whether the Government of Canada is employing this individual. Mr. Speaker, what kind of cynicism is it, that we are witnessing here today? Mr. Speaker, I don't know how to describe the mentality of anyone, who would come down to that low level, continuously attacking people who are not in a position to defend themselves publicly. It reflects truly, it reflects very much on the people on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ENNS: Would the honourable member concede to a question?

MR. USKIW: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Question.

MR. ENNS: Well, my question simply would be this. Inasmuch as the gentleman under discussion was his Deputy Minister of Agriculture, and presumably gave him advice from time to time on agriculture matters, was it the same gentleman that gave the former Minister of Agriculture the advice that prompted him in this Chamber to say that every acre of farmland in Manitoba should be sold for a dollar, that every acre of farmland should be considered as a public utility, and that we should have full and collectivised state farming in Maniooba. Was is that red Bill Johnson that gave the former Minister of Agriculture that advice?

MR. USKIW: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member for Lakeside of course knows that he is speaking something that is not true. Yes, show it to me, sure. — Interjection — No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ENNS: He said that in the House.

MR. USKIW: No, no, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ENNS: You said that in the House, that all farmland should be sold for a dollar an acre.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, order please. The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

MR. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, the First Minister of this province, who is finding it a bit warm in this Chamber at the moment. —(Interjection)— Just a cigarette, yes . . . realized, Mr. Speaker, that there have been a good number of meetings as between federal and provincial governments over the last several years on the question of rail line abandonment, on the question of the Crow rate, on the question of the whole grain transportation system, and in some way he had to upstage the events, Mr. Speaker, because that's what the January conference was all about. The meetings were under way, the discussions were under way, but the Premier of this province wanted some publicity and so he tried to force the other Premiers and the Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board and Transportation, the Honourable Otto Lang, into a meeting in Winnipeg to discuss transportation problems with respect to the grain industry. And that meeting was held in January, and if you read the document that was presented by this Premier to that particular conference on January 8th, Mr. Speaker, it has no position. All it says is: "Let's get together and talk about railway transportation problems, or grain transportation problems." It presents nothing; has no position. It's merely an exploratory meeting, but it had to be held because the First Minister was having some image

on that particular issue.

He wanted to upstage events and so, at the conference in Ottawa, he put enough pressure on his colleagues, indeed the Federal Minister, to have this meeting on the 8th of January on that particular issue. But nothing happened other than a decision to continue discussing the problem as has been the case now for several years.

But then, Mr. Speaker, we have this meeting in British Columbia and we have another disaster, Mr. Speaker. The First Minister indicates to us that he is not forsaking the rate structure that the prairie grain producers have enjoyed for many many years in this country, that he was well aware of the needs and the interests of the grain producers and indeed the economy of western Canada, and that he had that fully in mind when he made his proposals the other day.

But, Mr. Speaker, if you read paragraph 3 on page 10 of his submission which he tabled here today, and I am going to quote from it, Mr. Speaker, and just point out where the flaw lies in this submission. The Premier goes on to say in paragraph 3 of this document, and I quote: "Over the decades, the western farmer has enjoyed the benefits of the Crow and I maintain that in no way can the farmers of western Canada be expected to give up those benefits, unless it can be demonstrated that a superior system will result". Well, what is he really saying, Mr. Speaker? He is saying: "Yes, we don't want to give up the Crow rate unless there is an improvement in the transportation system, then we are prepared to give it up." That's really what this paragraph says, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the First Minister shakes his head. I will read it to him again. It says: "Over the decade, the western farmer has enjoyed the benefits of the Crow and I maintain that in no way can the farmers of western Canada be expected to give up those benefits, unless", unless — the key word — "it can be demonstrated that a superior system will result".

So, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is saying to Otto Lang and to his colleagues in western Canada, that: "Yes, if we improve the railway system in this country, that we will accept the idea of a higher freight rate with respect to grain movement across this country". That's really what he is saying. —(Interjection)— That is not what the Premier of Saskatchewan is saying, Mr. Speaker. We know what the Premier of Saskatchewan is saying. He is insisting that the Crow rate be maintained and that if it's necessary to deal with the other commodities, then the provinces might consider kicking in a few million dollars to bring the processed commodities down to the Crow rate. That's what the Premier of Saskatchewan has been saying.

MR. LYON: . . .of the record and on a point of privilege for the benefit of the protection of the Premier of Saskatchewan. . . —(Interjection)—

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, order please, order please. The Honourable First Minister on a point of privilege.

MR. LYON: Does my honourable friend want me to read him back the words of the Premier of Saskatchewan which are already on the record?

MR. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, let's assume that there is an improvement in the railway system and the grain movement flows in a pattern that is satisfactory to all of us. And as a result of that we have to add very substantially to the freight rate structure which has to be paid for by the prairie farmers. And let's assume for example, that that rate would be equal to the rate in the United States just across the border in North Dakota and Minnesota. Do you realize, Mr. Speaker, what that rate would be? Well, Mr. Speaker, I would hazard a guess, I'm probably dated in my figures, but it would be somewhere in the order of 80 or 90 cents a hundredweight, perhaps even more in North Dakota, from North Dakota out to the Soo. That's what we're talking about which will indeed reduce the income of every grain producer in this country, very substantially, Mr. Speaker. And I mention that simply because the First Minister has not, to date at least, informed himself on the real impact on the farmers, on the economy of this province, and the economy of western Canada.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the crow rate is important to western Canada because it has, in fact, helped very substantially the income levels of our producers and the total economic picture for the four western provinces. The Royal Commissions that were held over the years, including the last one, the Hall Commission, are recommending against abolishing the crow rate, and everyone knows that, Mr. Speaker.

But I think what we should do is examine what would happen in this country of ours in the prairie region if we went to what the First Minister calls compensatory rates. Based on the railway submissions in 1974, this is a Saskatchewan figure, Mr. Speaker, we don't have a Manitoba one, but the cost to the farmer in Saskatchewan, based on the figures of 1974 which were provided by the railways, would have been 36 cents higher for every bushel of wheat if they went to

freight rates. In today's terms, that would be approximately 50 cents given the inflation factor since 1974. According to the studies done in Saskatchewan a wheat farmer with 400 acres of wheat would lose \$3,400.00 on his farm just on the increased freight rates. That is, Mr. Speaker, a very substantial impact on the income position of every farmer in this country, and so it is obvious that that is a route that we would not want to follow.

According to the studies done by the Province of Saskatchewan, prairie farmers would suffer a direct loss of \$330 million in 1977. That's based on 1974 costs plus 10 percent per year inflation since 1974. A loss of \$330 million on the movement of grain, Mr. Speaker. According to Saskatchewan Provincial personal income would drop by \$277 million annually as a result of a change in freight rates based on a compensatory system. Personal expenditures on goods and services would decrease by \$210 million per year, Mr. Speaker. Retail sales would drop by \$125 million per year and government revenues would decrease by \$46 million annually. And they go on to say that if the crow rate were to go the railways would be able to charge higher rates on less profitable rail lines forcing farmers to haul to fewer delivery points resulting in the closure of many local elevators and increased road and maintenance costs.

So these are the kinds of studies that we have to undertake, Mr. Speaker, if we are going to negotiate with the railways and with the Minister in charge of the railways in Canada and indeed with all of the other people involved. Mr. Speaker, there were a lot of submissions made on this issue over those years, a lot of submissions. And by the way, Mr. Speaker, I might point out that there was greater unanimity up until this point in time on those issues in Western Canada than there is today. The First Minister might be interested to . . .

MR. ENNS: Too busy trying to build crocus dairy plants, Sam.

MR. USKIW: The First Minister might be interested to know that the four western premiers not too long ago agreed that it might be worthwhile considering public ownership of the railroad beds as one way of dealing with the problem of grain transportation. That was an agreement entered into some 3 or 4 years ago. It might interest the First Minister to know that that proposition was endorsed by every Premier in Western Canada but obviously the government of Canada has not found favour with that option.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the Province of Saskatchewan may be talking about the need to provide for adjustments in the freight rates to the railways. That may be possible, but they are not forsaking the crow rate to the producers, Mr. Speaker, as is the submission of this government. —(Interjection)— Well, Mr. Speaker, their own document speaks for itself that unless —(Interjections)— Yes but, Mr. Speaker, the submission indicates that if there is improvement in the rail transportation system then it's quite all right to abolish the crow. So that in essence the First Minister finds himself in a somewhat embarrassing position and, Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder that there was no agreement on his proposal at the conference. And you know, if you look at the communique, Communique No. 2, Grain Handling and Transportation, what distinction does our Premier have with respect to his proposal.

Well on Page 2, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to quote it says, "The Manitoba proposal for a further study of grain transportation issue was reviewed." That's it. That's how much they thought of this proposal, Mr. Speaker, a one line mention that there was a proposal from the Province of Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan has at least gone so far as to announce four important principles with respect to this issue. One of them is to eliminate competition as the present national transportation policy. —(Interjection)— That's an option, yes, that's an option. That is an option that should be looked at. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the best way to negotiate with the CPR on this issue would be to let them know that you are considering that as an option. That is the first position that should be put forward and then you have a strong position from which to bargain. —(Interjections)— That is the position. Yes, oh yes, it got us a long way with Inco, yes, we were able to tell Inco that the Thompson was going to continue that was our policy.

MR. ENNS: You could describe that as the Kiev position, then it's the Moscow position. —(Interjections)— That will nationalize

MR. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, I don't care whose position it is. All I know is that if we don't, you cannot negotiate with a giant when you are on your knees, Mr. Speaker. You have got to take the upper hand. And so, Mr. Speaker, the posture of the Government of Canada and the posture of the governments of the prairie provinces should be in the upper hand position vis-a-vis the railways, then you can negotiate. You cannot negotiate with them if you are going to plead with

them hoping that they will give you a concession or two here and there.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that what we have been doing is not satisfactory. We know that, but we also know, Mr. Speaker, that we should not capitulate to the railway companies, that we should have a public policy and that we should let them know what that policy is and from that point on, we should negotiate.

The second point that the Province of Saskatchewan has indicated as a policy is the need to recognize a relationship between transportation and national unity. That is very fundamental to their position, Mr. Speaker.

The third point is that we must recognize transportation as a public utility.

The fourth point is that we should use transportation as a tool for overcoming regional disparities. productivity, that is economic slavery, Mr. Speaker. That is slavery of the worse kind because it is, to a large extent, Mr. Speaker, invisible. At least it doesn't appear to be blatant slavery as it was when it was sort of the use of the whip and the chain and so on. But it is there nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, and every one of us here has a responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to recognize that economics dictate, if you are talking about freedom and democracy through the economic system, it dictates that you have got to provide for a society then with more equality. You have to pass rules of the game, laws, that provide for the opportunity for more equality. That is the way to abolish slavery, Mr. Speaker. We have yet not reached that point. We have yet to release a lot of our own slaves in this country, Mr. Speaker, because they are bound by those chains of economic deprivation. They are bound by those chains today — people in Winnipeg, people in Morden, people in every city and town of this country are bound by those chains today, Mr. Speaker. The fact that this government believes that we can have an inflation rate of 10 or 12 or 15 percent annually and then sit on the question of minimum wages for three years is a good indication of it.

What is that, Mr. Speaker, if not extracting productivity from people without paying them their just reward. That is absolute economic slavery, Mr. Speaker. So when they want to talk about slavery, I can give them ample evidence of how it works and where it exists, and we have it in spades by the Conservative administration in Manitoba; and heaven forbid, if we have to face a similar situation through a Conservative administration in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to touch on one other issue, and that is the fact that yesterday we had the results of the election of officers to the Cattle Association, where because of the negligence of our Minister of Agriculture, we find that there was no adequate procedures that were established and followed to make sure that the people who voted had their ballots counted properly, and so that it wouldn't have jeopardized the candidates that were running for office. Now, Mr. Speaker, historically in this province, we have had a relatively good system whenever we had to hold referendums on matters involving agricultural producers. The Manitoba Marketing Board usually did a fairly adequate job, with respect to conducting the referendum, the counting of ballots and making sure that there was nothing underhanded in the process. But this minister, Mr. Speaker, decided that he was going to delegate out that responsibility to the private sector. We are now going to have referendums for the public, but handled by private entrepreneurs, and so, we are now in the position where we have had the spectacle of scrutineers handling ballots, and what aggravates the situation is that we have a close race in one of the districts, Mr. Speaker, there is only three votes between the winner and the loser, and there are some five spoiled ballots which I gather is questionable whether they are all spoiled or not.

But in the midst of all this, we have this scrutineer who was handling these ballots during the counting procedure. We cannot be sure, Mr. Speaker, whether or not that scrutineer influenced the result of that vote, one way or the other — we really can't be sure.

A MEMBER: Are you making an accusation?

MR. USKIW: I'm making an accusation that this Minister —(Interjection)— that this Minister, yes, yes, absolutely, I'm making an accusation that this Minister has absconded from his responsibilities, because it was this Minister who passed Bill 25, under which this is all occurring. It is his appointed Board that has passed the by-laws which are governing these elections, Mr. Speaker, —(Interjection)— yes, it was his appointed Board. Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the result of that is going to be, but I know that there may be innocent people that will be victims of whatever occurs.

The person who has been declared elected, is of course now in a quandary as to whether he is elected or whether there is going to be an appeal, or a court case, or whatever the procedures are to correct the situation and we may be into another runoff election because, this Minister, Mr. Speaker, was hung up on the idea that someone other than the government should run this election, and you know I'm rather curious to . . .

MR. GREEN: Well, he knows the government is corrupt.

MR. USKIW: Well, all right, the Member for Inkster has an answer perhaps, but you know there's more to it than that, Mr. Speaker. The person who was named returning officer, Mr. Speaker, was indeed involved in the debates on the beef industry for a good number of years, and has taken a position, when he was the editor of the Brandon Sun and since he established his own newspaper in Boissevain, has taken a position, a side on the issue. And I don't know how neutral that person could be with respect to this election, having had that background.

Now, one has to raise some questions, you know, is the reason that the Minister chose to go this route the fact that he owes some debts to some people? Is that really what we're talking about, Mr. Speaker?

MR. GREEN: That's what it is.

MR. USKIW: Are they favours now being returned, Mr. Speaker, is the question I put to this Minister? And is the democratic process of this province in jeopardy because of those previous commitments, Mr. Speaker? Those are the questions that loom large, those are the questions that loom large, Mr. Speaker. Because it's a scandal, it's an absolute scandal, to think that in this day and age something like that could occur, after a hundred years of experience in conducting elections — provincial and federal; municipal; hospitals; school boards; and we get ourselves into this kind of a jackpot, Mr. Speaker.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether the returning officer was cutting on costs, but the paper that the envelopes were made of is so thin you can see the ballots through the paper, through the envelopes — you can see the marks, you can read how people have voted. That's what I'm told, Mr. Speaker, and I think it bears some investigation on the part of the Minister. I don't know why he would investigate, because it's really his own doings, Mr. Speaker. He prefers it that way, he prefers it that way delegating the responsibility that is his, to the people of this province, to an outside party, that has had over a period of time a particular interest on one side of that question. I think, Mr. Speaker, we expect a lot more from our Minister. We expect our Minister, whoever he is from time to time, to exercise the responsibilities that he was asked to undertake when he was sworn into office; and this Minister, because of some either previous commitment or ideological hang up, that suggested everything must be done by people other than in the public service, has brought us into this kind of a dilemma. And it's unfortunate, because a lot of people are inconvenienced as a result.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has five minutes.

MR. USKIW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is perhaps just one small example of the methodology that is employed by our friends opposite, in the running of the affairs of this province. They would like to, yes, they would like to remove as much responsibility from government as they could, regardless, Mr. Speaker, of how that affects the populace as a whole, regardless of the negative aspects of following that policy.

So why are we electing these people, Mr. Speaker? You know, we have to raise the question — the people of Manitoba have voted in a government for the purpose of protecting their interest —(Interjection)— Well at least that is what is believed to be the case, I know that it doesn't always happen, Mr. Speaker. —(Interjection)— I know that that was what the expectations were, but we know that since October of 1977 the people, of course, have lost out, Mr. Speaker, because this government is not looking after the affairs of the people as a whole, but are committed to looking after the affairs of a handful of people who are their particular friends. —(Interjection)— Yes, yes, it's very evident, Mr. Speaker.

It's very evident —(Interjection)— well the Government House Leader talks about 77 percent. Mr. Speaker, the particular district over which we have this dispute in the balloting, only 36 percent of the people voted. —(Interjection)— Yes, only 36 percent of those registered to vote cast ballots in this election. That shows you the importance of Bill 25, Mr. Speaker, that was rammed through this Legislature last year — that shows you the importance of it. Mr. Speaker, provincially only 42 percent, I'm told, provincially, Mr. Speaker, 42 percent voted to elect a Board to the Cattleman's Association, and this Minister, Mr. Speaker, has forced all of the cattlemen of this province to belong to that association. That's where we are, Mr. Speaker. —(Interjection)—

Where, Mr. Speaker, where is that stack of support that this Minister was trying to imply when he brought in Bill 25? —(Interjection)— Yes, two-thirds of the people in District 9 didn't vote. Two-thirds didn't vote, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DRIEDGER: That's because the Farmers' Union guys didn't vote in your area, they voted in mine.

MR. USKIW: Mr. Speaker, two-thirds of the eligible voters did not vote to elect a member to the Cattle Producers Association under Bill 25 in District 9. Yes, and this Minister was trying to impress us with the fact that he had such overwhelming support for a dictatorial piece of legislation when he introduced it a year ago. —(Interjection)—

Mr. Speaker, there will be other occasions to deal with this Minister on a number of other topics. And Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should even indicate to him that we are tremendously amused by his amendments to The Natural Products Marketing Act, and I'm sure — I'm going to ask the Member for Morris, or the Government House Leader, to read that particular document — because I'm sure he will have some very interesting recollections as to what his position was with respect to that kind of legislation, a piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that, with the stroke of a pen, takes away the freedom of every producer in Manitoba. —(Interjection)— Yes, takes away the freedom of every producer in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I'm amazed that the Government House Leader is going to be able to vote for that measure, because I can recite chapter and verse; all I have to do is dig up Hansard from several years past, and I can convince him, through reading his own words, Mr. Speaker, reading back to him his own comments, his own statements, his own speeches, that he cannot vote for that kind of legislation.

And so, yes, Mr. Speaker, this government attacked the New Democratic Party government when they were in power, for using The Natural Products Marketing Act, which was there for many many decades, but, Mr. Speaker, with the stroke of a pen, they are going to make that Act invalid to the extent that they wish for every commodity, for every producer in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

MR. DOWNEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 26, on the Interim Supply, and I would like to carry on and bring forward some of the things that have been discussed in the debate this evening by the Premier of the Province, and by some of the Members opposite.

I think I would like to start out by saying how pleased I am that the Premier of a province, who has such a wide representation from all across Manitoba, has taken upon himself the task of really looking at the major industry and some of the major problems that that industry is facing; that of course being the problem of grain handling and transportation, and how it is directly related to the whole economy of Canada. Not just Mickey Mousing around like the member opposite, who was, when his term of office was playing around with the farmers' lives and trying to compete against them with their State Farm Programs and this type of thing, but really has taken hold of the issue, and has really been supported by the Premiers of Canada and the Prime Minister in his approach to the resolution of some of the problems that are really facing Canada's — I think it's the second major exporting industry that we have, and that being the grain industry.

So I'm very pleased indeed to stand to put our government's past on the record books, and I think that that recognition should be brought to the House; not only the recognition that it's been given in western Canada in the agricultural community, but I'd like to — for the benefit of the record — just read how far this has really carried, the way that our Premier of Manitoba and the government has really brought this issue out to the people of Canada. And I'd like to read the opening remarks of a doctor in Prince Rupert, Doctor Hecht, who is a medical doctor but very interested in the development of the Port of Prince Rupert, and he had a paper prepared to present to the Premiers of western Canada, when we visited Prince Rupert yesterday, and I would like to read the opening remarks that Doctor Hecht had to say, and I quote:

"While wholeheartedly endorsing Mayor Lester's welcome to each member of this distinguished group, I should like to especially welcome Premier Sterling Lyon to Prince Rupert.

"The January 1979 Winnipeg Conference on Grain Handling and Transportation, hosted by the government of Manitoba and co-chaired by Premier Lyon, has been widely acknowledged an outstanding success." And I continue, "This upbeat and optimistic conference was singular in the virtual unanimity displayed by those present with regard to identifying the main constrictions in grain transportation, the urgent need for rapid progress to resolution of those constrictions and the unhappy near-term results for prairie agriculture and the economy if positive and immediate action is delayed for any reason. There appeared to be no reservation, whatever, expressed to the statement made by Premier Blakeney, that there exists an enormous potential for increased grain production and export opportunities."

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to put on the record the acceptance that our Premier received

in Prince Rupert, the recognition that he got for his efforts, and the efforts of Manitoba government, to resolve the problems of not only western Canada, but the economy of all of Canada.

I would also like to say that the continuation of the efforts to see the development of the Port of Prince Rupert, the time that was spent — not only by the Premier of Manitoba, but the premiers of western Canada — to really look at the physical capabilities of that port, and to really urge the people, the federal government, to make a decision on the future of the government grain terminal and to work on the railroads, to come to an agreement on the exchange of cars so that we could see a sufficient amount of grain get to that port to ship to the markets that have been truly identified.

I think that is a major accomplishment, and as for to continue on and discuss the proposal that was put forward at the Prince George meeting at the Premiers' Conference I think is just another positive step, another positive step, to show the concern, the ongoing need for not only one particular group of people to speak out, but to speak out as an industry — as government and industry should speak out — those people who are responsible leaders and should continue to be concerned about the economic development of, as again, not only of farmers, but of Canada. I think that it's a clear indication that there had been a long-term need for someone to really come to grips with the issue. And as I said earlier, I think that to discuss it as it's being discussed, it has been discussed, and it will continue to be discussed, and with the committee that is being set up to discuss a form of common ground that the provinces can take, no one should be ashamed of any kind of a position like that.

Because let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, and I find it very amusing to find the Interim Leader of the NDP Party across the way, the Interim Leader who professes to know so much about the Crow rate, the statutory rate . . . you know, I don't know what his involvement has been with the farm, but I would have to say that I was, as most of the members on this side of the House, I might remind the members opposite, Mr. Speaker . . . are of a good strong agricultural background.

: And I'd also like to say, Mr. Speaker, that one of the —(Interjection)— I guess two of the things that we grow up with in rural Manitoba, particularly if you're involved in the grain industry — there are two things that you really have to learn as you're growing up. And I understand that. And one of them is to fear the Lord. And the other one is never to discuss the Crow rate. —(Interjection)—

I think as an agriculture person I understand that. We know what the benefits of the Crow rate are, and we are not going to sell any farmer down the drain, let me tell you that. And I think the statement that was made clearly, clearly shows that. And I don't think that the farm people . . . in fact I'm very sure that the farm people are going to listen to the trivial comments that are made from the Leader of the Opposition, who never did, and I don't think ever will, understand farm people.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it also goes to show some of the comments I heard the member from the neighbouring constituency that I represent, from Souris-Killarney, that they really are out-of-touch with reality. They really are. And you know, we go right into the talk about personalities. You know, we talk about some of the past employees of a department, and it really bothers the past Minister of Agriculture. I would have to say that if he'd of been in touch with reality, that he wouldn't of probably been on the other side. That the farm people really told them the message in the beef vote and they told them the message every time they turned around. That they couldn't live with that kind of a dictating socialist that was in charge of the policies that were being administered.

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that as far as 4 colours are concerned, it doesn't really bother me if anybody refers to any of my employees as my "blue" deputy, or as my "blue" employee. You know, it really doesn't bother me that much. So I think when we discuss this, I would like to say that at least we're talking about an individual who is still alive and still able to speak out for himself. We're not debating a man who served his country and are now picking holes in what he has done in the past or carried forward. I think it's a very unfair approach, and I really feel that when people put themselves into public life, that they should at least be left to lay in peace following that.

When we look at the member's figures that he brings forward as far as the Saskatchewan study, it really is an area that I would have thought he would have left completely alone. Because when we took over office and we were involved in looking over some of these studies that had been done and some of the information that was available to us, we find the cupboard not only completely bare of information and money, but any direction on what should really happen to lead the farm people of Manitoba. And I would have to say that now he is relying on a study done by Saskatchewan, and I would have to say that we realize that they are an NDP government in Saskatchewan, and I would have to say that some of their farm policies aren't that bad. But I would have to say that they have one that I think should be brought to the attention of the public, and I think that that

is in the vertical integration that they have recently undertaken, and that is to go into and purchasing of a large hog production unit at Lanigan, Saskatchewan and purchased by the processing plant at the . . . the name of the plant just escapes me for a minute, but I understand that the Government of Saskatchewan are something alike 50 percent shareholders in it. And now in the production of hogs.

We cannot totally support that kind of a tight movement — competition for the farm people.

MR. DOWNEY: So, Mr. Speaker, when he refers to some of the Saskatchewan policies, I think that we should discuss a few more of them. And as far as the study that Saskatchewan put forward, I would have to say that the figures probably could be quite correct; I won't debate those figures. But let us take a look, Mr. Speaker, at the fact that we will have a study that we will be able to discuss with the people of Manitoba, not as it relates to Saskatchewan, but we are the government for Manitoba. And we hope to continue to do that, and be that, and we will, I am sure, be able to speak totally for the farm population, just not for 23 percent or less like the last government were able to.

When we talked about the nationalization . . . that really strings a nice echo for the Member for Lac du Bonnet. That is right up his right up his alley. I think that to totally get into the running of business, the nationalization of a railroad would have fit completely in with his idea of state farming, so that there would be no problem with getting the job done. It would be completely a state control, and it would be a smooth government-regulated program.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that when we talk about the beef vote and the accusations that are being made by the member opposite, you know, we get right into a program that I thought the member opposite would really talk about — and that, of course, was his beef stabilization program, which I'm sure he'd like to go out now and hang his hat on and really go campaigning on it, because he's really proud of that, that he really went in to help the farmers. Well I guess, Mr. Speaker, it was a program to do nothing more than to swing the farmers on the side of the NDP Party.

And you know, really, that NDP really has several meanings, 7 and I think we should bring it to light another meaning that it really should be — and that of course is the "No Development Party": I really think that that is the type of words that they have represented. And how, Mr. Speaker, how can we discuss a problem that is facing so many people, if we don't provide the opportunity to discuss it totally. And I think that we have to work with the farm population — the farm people, the farm leaders, as has been mentioned by the Premier in his comments, that the farm community leaders have spoken out on this issue. And they do want an opportunity to debate it, and I'm sure that the total picture has to be looked at — as was being proposed and I'm sure that it will continue to be discussed and looked at.

We talk of regional disparities, and I think that when we look at the development of the processing of products in western Canada, the opportunities for processing in western Canada are tremendous. With value added in everything that is done.

But you know, when the honourable member opposite mentions rapeseed, it reminds me of an individual who was talking about the last Minister of Agriculture, and he said "You know, I really shook my head the first time I met that man from Lac du Bonnet." He said "We were sitting in a coffee shop downtown in Winnipeg", and he said "the Member for Lac du Bonnet, — who was then the Minister of Agriculture — he said "I've heard a lot about rapeseed." He said "Maybe you could tell me what it is." You know, I really have to remember that — and that is a true story that was told to me by an individual in the farm community. He was more concerned, Mr. Speaker, of keeping

A MEMBER: . . . his black bean.

MR. DOWNEY: Well . . . well I think the black bean issue is one that pretty well speaks for itself; it's another one of the disasters that was entered into by the last minister. But I really think we've got a tremendous opportunity in western Canada to develop processed goods, the rapeseed industry being one of them. And as I mentioned earlier in one of my other speeches, the two organizations that, because of government plans to build a rapeseed plant or because of their involvement in industry, they decided not to. And the great labour party that they are across the way — who are they providing jobs for? They were exporting their jobs, Mr. Speaker — exporting their jobs to Japan.

That, Mr. Speaker, are some of the reasons why we haven't had under their government new job creation. Because, Mr. Speaker, we are not in the business of building and being in business. We're in the job of providing infrastructure for the farm people, testing new varieties, demonstrating

to them that they can produce a wider variety of crops in a larger area of this province.

I'd like to, Mr. Speaker, just say that we have heard the long cry last year from the Member for Ste. Rose. You know, if he isn't complaining about the tarpaulins on the beds, he's complaining about a feed shortage. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that there was truly a quality problem in some of the feeding areas of some of the parts of Manitoba. But, Mr. Speaker, the way to approach that, in my estimation, is not continually hand money out for people to buy their feed with or to provide transportation, but it is to work with them to provide new varieties of grasses to improve the unroved land through forage crop programs, and to provide some guidance as far as the extension is concerned for them to provide for themselves.

I think, Mr. Speaker, with that kind of a program being introduced to work with the farmers, to demonstrate to them some of the types of crops that can be . . . well, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Lac du Bonnet says it's 100 years old. Well really, I would have to say that when you look at things that are 100 years old, they're probably not too bad. The only thing that went wrong with this province was that it was a bad experience that it had 100 years after it was part of this country — and that was during the rule of the NDP Regime.

A MEMBER: We weren't there for 100 years — it just felt like it.

MR. DOWNEY: Right on. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker . . .

A MEMBER: And 100 years more.

MR. DOWNEY: One hundred years is right. One hundred years of — they did as much damage in 10 as it would have taken a kid in a candy shop 2.

So when we look at the regional disparities, and some of the ones that are created by the members opposite because of the fact that they, of their philosophy and the fact that they wouldn't look at and work with the people of this province to look at some of the problems that were inhibiting some of the development, then that is why we're where we are today. And I think that we have to really compliment the Premier and the way he has taken the step towards solving the problems.

Another area that I would like to discuss, and that is, of course, the slavery that the member opposite has brought up — the fact that there still is slavery. I guess, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the cost of Hydro to the rural people in Manitoba. We were enjoying some of the most reasonable type of power, of hydro-electric power of anywhere in the world, I'm sure. And of course that was taken away because of the mismanagement, and, Mr. Speaker, we look at the Minister who is now responsible for it, who is taking some real progressive steps in discussing with other provinces the development of a regional power grid. And I commend him for that, because I think, Mr. Speaker, we're all conscious of the fact that we live in a time when we have energy problems, and I think we have to do everything we can to make maximum use of the power and the energy that is available to us as western Canadians.

I'd just like to go back and mention the Member for Ste. Rose, who gave his great hospital speech here not too long ago, about the fact of how badly he had been treated, and the tarpaulins that he was made to sleep on and the shortage of food that he had on, and the fact that, really, the hospital care was really in despair.

MR. ADAM: Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Ste. Rose on a point of privilege.

MR. ADAM: Yes, a personal privilege, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture has just stated that I had said in my comments that I had been badly treated in the hospital and that the food was poor. That is incorrect. I never made those remarks. I ask the Minister to withdraw. I never made those remarks. He can look in Hansard and read and I can prove it to him.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

MR. DOWNEY: Mr. Speaker, if I said that he said the food was poor, I will retract that statement and I will say that he said that there wasn't any for a certain period of time and he was getting quite hungry. I guess that was a different approach. But he did refer to the sheets as being tarpaulins, that he was lying on, that he was mistreated.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that the Member for Ste. Rose should have also put on the record the fact that our Minister of Health is providing him with new additional health service care and

buildings in his constituency, which, how many years has he waited for under his great party? Mr. speaker, I think that it should be put on the record, but he wouldn't put it on the record, that he is being looked after. His people are being serviced by the Conservative government.

Mr. Speaker, I think that, when we start debating what has happened in the past that we can commend the Minister of Health for the work that he has done. I'm sure that the members keep dragging in a letter that was sent to a member who couldn't make up his mind on what side of the fence he — a mugwumper. Isn't that what they're called on the other side, someone referred to? And really, I think that our Minister of Health has provided the people of the province with the proper kind of health care, the people who are in need, are looking after the affairs of the sick, and I'm sure that he will continue to be responsible, as I intend to support him in the way in which he is performing.

Mr. Speaker, in the total outlook for what has taken place since we've come into government, and the future as far as I can see it, some of the programs that are being introduced and some of the area in which we are intending to go, the direction we want to go with the development of our agricultural industry, the development of our programs, will not only keep Manitoba in the lead as far as the agricultural people are concerned, and all of Manitobans, but will lead the way.

I'd also just like to, Mr. Speaker, discuss some of the things that we've been looking at as far as the development of Manitoba, and I will be announcing tomorrow a subsidiary agreement, some of the programs that we've entered into with the Federal government. In the area of value-added crops we intend to further expand the areas in which some of these special crops have been grown. For example, the grain corn shows great promise for a large part of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we saw an increase of something like 267 percent last year. We, Mr. Speaker, are expanding the coverage through crop insurance to assure the farmers that they will not be taking a tremendous risk but will have some coverage by a government program. And Mr. Speaker, I think that a real tribute can be paid to the farmers of Manitoba who show their desire to further expand their efforts to provide food and new products for job opportunities in Manitoba. I think we, as a government, want to see, not only the farm people but the total community, the farm, the labour, everyone, prosper.

And when we talk about the minimum wage, I would dare say that there aren't many farms in Manitoba and people involved in the agricultural community, are paying far in excess of any minimum wage, and still have a difficult time in obtaining farm help. So, Mr. Speaker, I think that it's only an indication that there are lots of jobs available, that they don't have to rely on the minimum wage, that, in fact, the farm community every day are pleading for qualified individuals to go out and be a part of their labour force. I think that's a good point, in fact that there is a lot of opportunity, it's just that the motivation has to be there, and I'm sure that that will come.

I'd just like to refer, Mr. Speaker, to another program that we are working on, and that is to further strengthen the rural water delivery system. That we will be able to work with communities, work with communities that are not as large as others, some that are under 300 of a population, that we will work to have them provide themselves with the infrastructure. We do not feel that the total growth of Manitoba should be in the larger centres, but should be distributed throughout the province through the development of some of the smaller communities. Mr. Speaker, I think in closing my comments, that I would like to just reaffirm the position that we have taken, that we are in no way and by no means trying to destroy or take away any benefits that farmers have, in fact I think the whole approach is to re-confirm our support for the benefits of the statutory rates to remain with the farm community and I'm sure that that is what has been said many times by members of this side of the House, and we will continue to say that. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the review that has been proposed and the committee that will be working on a position by the provinces, that we will be able to work out many of the problems and look forward to a real improvement in the grain handling and transportation, which will, in return, add to the development of all of Canada.

MR. SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question? The Honourable Member for St. Boniface.

MR. DESJARDINS: Mr. Speaker, I think it will take me a little more than a minute to tell the members how wonderful they are and the good work they're doing, so I wonder if you'd call it 10 o'clock now.

MR. SPEAKER: The hour being 10 o'clock, the Honourable Member for St. Boniface was speaking on the debate, the debate will stand in his name.

The hour being 10 o'clock, the House is accordingly adjourned and stands adjourned till 10 o'clock tomorrow morning. (Friday.)