

Special Select Standing Committee on Members' Services

Tuesday, November 4, 1980

Chairman: Mr. Amerongen

6:45 p.m.

MR CHAIRMAN: Let's approve the minutes of the last meeting.

MR APPLEBY: I move adoption as circulated.

MR PURDY: Is it necessary to do that until such time as we call another meeting that will deal with those subjects?

MR CHAIRMAN: I think we usually do. Agreed?

HON MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR CHAIRMAN: Now, the special purpose for which this meeting was called was to hear Scotty McIntosh on those plans. First of all, I should say that there was a misunderstanding between the Clerk and me as to which one was going to invite him. I wasn't aware of that until fairly recently. As it turns out, as far as I know, that really makes no difference. It doesn't seem likely that he would have come anyway. The Clerk was involved in the telephone discussions, so I'd better turn it over to him.

MR STEFANIUK: I contacted the Deputy Minister of Government Services, because that is obviously the person through whom I should go to invite the architect, as the architect is not in the employ of the Legislative Assembly. The deputy minister stated to me that he would consider coming but that he would have to consult with his minister for permission to come, along with the architect. Subsequent to that I was visited by the minister's executive assistant, who said to me that on the minister's behalf, he expressed some concern that the minister had not been invited to attend tonight's meeting. He added that it is his minister's policy in matters which have "political implications" to attend the meetings personally, accompanied by such support staff as might be necessary.

I tried to impress on the executive assistant that it was rather important that the deputy minister and the architect attend. I interpreted the deputy minister as being the person with the technical knowledge that was referred to. Nothing occurred until we were in the House this afternoon. At that time I received a note from the executive assistant to say that the minister would not attend.

MR CHAIRMAN: The idea, you may recall, was that one of the main purposes of the meeting was to go over the plans. Not only did the committee not suggest or recommend inviting the minister, but I would have thought that might have been superfluous, inasmuch as we were here to discuss an architect's plans. I for one would rather have that explanation come directly from the architect than from someone whom the architect might have briefed.

I don't know. It seems to me we've been hassling about this for such a long time. We have an important thing to do in regard to a matter which, by Executive Council decision, is the responsibility of the Speaker, on which the Speaker, of course, welcomes the advice of the committee. You have the latest

space directive -- if that's the way to put it -- from Executive Council, which shows who is responsible for which areas in the building. As I understand it, the Speaker is responsible for the Chamber, although it's understood that any work that's done in the Chamber would probably be done through Government Services. I think that's the case with practically all the work that is done in the building.

Anyhow, it does seem to me that this has been . . . I think it came up the first time -- no, it wasn't the first time -- when Mrs. Osterman attended her first meeting, just shortly before she was formally elected to the committee by the House. I think she expressed legitimate hesitation and said she didn't want to make any decisions on this point without having time to think about it. I think that probably applies to the rest of us too. But I respectfully suggest that we've had a lot of time to think about it now. In view of the money that is likely to be involved in the redecoration of the Chamber and the importance of doing that in the best possible way, in keeping with what the Chamber is and with the importance of the Legislative Assembly -- and the visitors. Keep in mind too that most of our visitors are Albertans, and they certainly expect when they come to visit their parliament, watching it do their work, working for them, they would expect a fairly high degree of, shall we say, good taste and practical arrangement, and so on, in the Chamber.

I've made this suggestion a number of times. I mentioned that I had gotten advice as to the best way to go about it. The advice was that we should get proposals from four architects with some reputed expertise in things that are traditional, such as our Chamber, and that we should give them a modest honorarium and get proposals. Then this committee should sit down and assess those proposals and decide whether we want any of them or whether we want to combine the best features of a number of them. I think that could easily be handled once we get the proposals. We might even consider inviting the architects in to explain their proposals. And, I would say, we should also consider the proposal that has been done by the government architect. Hopefully we can get around this impasse and have him to come to this committee too, if this committee so decides.

I'm being pressed by the minister to deal with it soon. That's understandable in view of the length of time that has been hovering over our heads. I'm suggesting that maybe the time has come for an appropriate motion and to get on with it.

MRS OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I found out this morning that these people had just been contacted and the minister just found out about it this morning and had indicated an interest. I understand the architect had been contacted only yesterday. I really believe that that sort of notice is not enough.

MR CHAIRMAN: There is no one who would agree with you quicker than the Clerk and myself.

MRS OSTERMAN: I asked the minister if he was interested, and he was. He said if people who were working for us are going to be asked to come to a committee, he by all means was interested. I would like that invitation once again to be issued, as quickly as possible. I don't see any reason at all why those people can't be here. But they're certainly going to have to have some week or 10 days' notification. I think that's most inappropriate that we are in this discussion when there was a misunderstanding. I understood that they wished to come if we were interested.

MR CHAIRMAN: I definitely thought that the invitation had gone out some time ago. The Clerk made a similar assumption. It turned out not to be true. All

I can do is apologize to the committee, and agree that that's not satisfactory and hope to remedy it on a future occasion.

But the problem I have is that when we are looking at -- it seems to me we haven't reached the stage where we have had a chance to look at a decent number, not a large number, of alternatives, then to say to the minister: look, this is the way we would like to do this; do your departmental people think we can do this within proper cost parameters, and so on.

I hasten to say, and hope you'll accept this: there is absolutely no personal animosity between the minister and myself. The difference is only in his concept as to how he does his job and my concept as to how I do mine and how I discharge my responsibilities. There's room for an honest difference of opinion there.

But I would have to question the need to have someone other than the architect whose plans we are discussing to come to explain those plans to us and discuss their merits, which was the purpose of this meeting. I don't see how a minister of any particular department or all departments would have any concern about that kind of thing, especially when the person who happens to be the architect here is, as far as I know, not a staff person of the department, rather is an architect in private practice. I've just never heard of a rule that says that, even if you are a departmental expert, the departmental experts may not go anywhere go give expert opinions without the presence of their minister. It seems to me that's being done all the time. I have great difficulty understanding the logic of his position, if that's the position.

MRS OSTERMAN: With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, we made a motion, and it was accepted a long time ago that we were going to discuss this with these people. If the minister would come along, I don't have any problem. If he's interested in the subject and he thinks it may have implications for him, I'd be delighted, if he thinks he has the time, for him to be here. I think we should carry through. We're going to get into the same argument we've been having for a long time. Before I'm willing to get into that discussion again, as to whether we need other architects consulted, I want that motion carried out, with the intent it expressed.

MR CHAIRMAN: Evidently, that motion can't be carried out unless this committee wishes to accept the dictates of the minister -- as I'm informed, and I'm not speaking from personal information -- according to which he will not permit the architect to come to this meeting unless the minister also comes himself. I don't know the reason for that.

Mind you, I had misgivings about the motion when we passed it, although I didn't mention it, because I felt what's the purpose. If we're going to consider alternatives, what's the purpose of now considering one alternative before the others are in? I have difficulty in understanding this, the whole business of . . . As I understand it, this is a committee which voices the opinions of the members and is here to advise the Speaker in some aspects of his function. It has worked reasonably well in that regard.

As I say, it seems to me -- I hope I can change the minister's mind; I'll be quite happy to try, to see if we can have the architect come. But I'd like to suggest that it would be perfectly in order if someone were to move a motion that we proceed to get the other four proposals that have been mentioned so many times, and then let's assess them all at the same time, in a practical way, which would be a normal way to proceed.

MR WOLSTENHOLME: How long did your advice say it would take them to prepare other plans?

MR CHAIRMAN: It didn't. It just said that was the way to go. I think they would be ready in a reasonable time. If we could have moved on this when the proposal came up, I'm sure we would have had them long ago.

MR PURDY: Just to refresh my memory, Mr. Chairman, have we got the budgetary requirements to go ahead?

MR CHAIRMAN: No, but if this committee wishes to proceed in this way, we have been assured of the funding, about three or four months ago. It would be a special warrant that would be attached to the estimates of the so-called Department of the Legislature.

MR GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I have felt for a long time that we should have proceeded. I don't know how long it is now since we first started discussing this. With the dollars we were talking about -- \$10,000, as I recall -- I think is a pittance with regard to the ultimate cost of carrying out whatever it is. I respect Connie's view that when we carry a motion here, that should be the direction the committee should take. Nevertheless I feel very strongly that our 75th Anniversary is going to have come and gone and we haven't even made fundamental decisions about what we're going to do with regard to the Chamber.

On that basis, I would move that motion, that we commission, hire, or whatever the term is, architects to provide us with suggested plans for the renovation of the Chamber.

MR CHAIRMAN: Do you want to put a number on it?

MR GOGO: I'm thinking in the context of our original one. We talked in terms of three or four ideas. I think the dollar amount, if my memory serves me right, was \$10,000.

MR CHAIRMAN: I was told that would cover four.

MR GOGO: I think that is what we discussed originally. I'll move that motion and get it on the table, to get this thing under way one way or the other. We seem to be repeating ourselves at meetings. I'm not speaking to the motion, but I submit that there are many matters I am concerned with about members and we seem to be spending a lot of time spinning our wheels.

MR MANDEVILLE: Mr. Chairman, I've had the same view I had when we started the discussion on this, that I feel that, not being knowledgeable on plans, if I can look at something and have something I can compare and put it together, I can make a lot better decision on what is going to be the best type of renovation we can get for this Legislature. It's long term, not just for a few years.

MR GOGO: Long after us.

MR MANDEVILLE: That's right. Respecting Connie's view that we did make a motion, with this in view I'll second Mr. Gogo's motion.

MR CHAIRMAN: I don't think you put a number on it, John.

MR GOGO: Number of people?

MR CHAIRMAN: Yes. I think we need that so we can act on the motion.

MR GOGO: My preference would be several.

MR MANDEVILLE: I think the proposal was four at \$2,500 each.

MR GOGO: Then I would have that in my motion if that's what the original proposal was. I remember the figure \$10,000.

MR WOLSTENHOLME: At the risk of repeating myself, I don't whether I stated at the meeting last time, but when I came back from the Canadian Parliamentary Association meeting in Victoria, I talked to numerous people. If I've said this here at this meeting, I apologize for repeating myself. After talking to ones out there, in other jurisdictions and so on, I had been arguing on a principle of \$10,000 for people, which I referred to as being an estimate, in my type of business, that I have now decided that maybe this is the way to go, to look at a lot of plans. So instead of dragging my feet on this for \$10,000, I'll go along with it now. Talking to some of them out there and how they do it, and talking to some of the bigger business of how it's going to be done, on something like this one presentation will hardly be enough. I've had my mind changed.

MR PURDY: One question I have. While I support the motion, is there going to be a hassle with Government Services and other people when the four architects come in for competition, to want to review the design of the building at the present time? Are these four people going to be assured that they will have access to present drawings, the flow charts for electrical and the speaking system and all that?

MR CHAIRMAN: I would assume they would, but I don't know to what extent they would need that, Bill. These are not engineering proposals; these are architectural.

MR APPLEBY: They're not structural.

MR PURDY: But even at that, I would think you should have a bit of engineering in your architectural design. It has to be compatible.

MR CHAIRMAN: If we ran into problems, I would report to the committee.

MRS OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, that kind of question is exactly the reason I wanted to have a discussion with some people who had already been looking at it. It didn't preclude my supporting getting some more proposals at all. But I just feel that there are questions to be answered, and I don't feel qualified to answer them. I realize where the committee is going at this point, but I'm going to register my concern, because I still feel exactly the same way. I will endeavor on my own to get that information, since we don't seem to be able to carry out a motion that's been on the books for I don't know how long. I'm really concerned about that. If there is some sort of breakdown in communications -- you know, I don't think they were really given an opportunity to respond, by being asked the day before the meeting to be in attendance.

MR CHAIRMAN: I agree.

MRS OSTERMAN: Then don't -- I have a feeling that everybody is feeling that somehow somebody else has caused the delay in getting this together, when in fact it's been in our hands for months. We haven't made that request until yesterday.

MR CHAIRMAN: The proposal arose out of the last meeting, which was in October.

MRS OSTERMAN: No. The proposal was in the minutes -- I can look it up -- before that.

MR CHAIRMAN: The resolution, I think, was in the last minutes.

MRS OSTERMAN: No. It was on there far before that. Oh yes. What we decided was today's meeting. It was in the minutes long before that.

MR CHAIRMAN: Well, in any case, the decision was that we would deal with it at this particular meeting. Are you ready for the question? Those in favor of the motion? Opposed? Carried.

Now, we had another item which was carried over. That was in regard to the classification of the Clerk and Clerk Assistant.

MR STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, may I suggest, as I did at the last meeting, that discussions pertaining to personnel matters be held in camera, that the tape be shut. With all due respect, that tape is transcribed by personnel in another area of the Legislative Assembly, and I would respectfully suggest that that kind of discussion should be held in camera by the committee and that staff might in fact be excused.

MR CHAIRMAN: Does the committee agree?

HON MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR CHAIRMAN: Just one rider on that. I think it would be useful if the Clerk were present while we're discussing the situation of the Law Clerk, because he is very much informed about it. He and I both had discussions about the Law Clerk. Is that all right? Okay.

*The recording terminated at 7:05 p.m.*