

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[5:10 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'll now declare the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries special emergency meeting called to order, and I would welcome Michael Ritter, Parliamentary Counsel, to our meeting. I requested that Mike be with us so that we could deal with this important matter this evening. At our last meeting, Tuesday, February 27, serious concerns were raised by Stockwell Day regarding an article which appeared in the Rocky Mountain House *Mountaineer*. That's the primary reason we're meeting tonight, so that we can discuss that. I asked Bob Pritchard to provide you with an unofficial copy of *Hansard*, Frank, so you could see the tone of the discussion that evening. I'd like to pause at this time, Frank, to see if there's anything you'd like to say. If not, then we'll turn to Stock.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did receive a copy from Mr. Pritchard, and I did receive a copy of *Hansard* and the article as well. Stockwell raised his concern, and I think he expressed it very eloquently, so I don't know if there's any need for Stockwell to go through it again, although I'm sure he may have some comments later on.

I guess what I would say is that if there's a perception that I've overstepped my bounds as a member of the committee, then I apologize to the committee and to you, Stockwell. I did not intend – and I don't believe that I did – that the report would be presented as a position of the committee or that even any decisions had been raised. So I do offer my apology in that regard. Perhaps in part my comments lead from my inexperience, being still a somewhat green rookie in this business.

With regards to the other issue that was raised regarding a previous concern, a previous article, I was not at that meeting when another article was discussed that Stockwell referred to. So I unfortunately wasn't apprised of that.

I just want to talk briefly about why I wanted to be on this committee in the first place, if I could just be allowed to mention that briefly. I feel very strongly that we have fair, reasonable representation in Alberta in the Legislature, and I felt it was important to be a member of the committee from Calgary, from my constituency. I felt very strongly about being on the committee, I wanted to be on the committee, I still do want to be on the committee, and I honestly believe that I have not compromised any results that may have come out of this committee, whatever that may be.

I do fully respect the process which we are undertaking. I would like to say that it's my respect for the committee, for the Legislature, for the democratic process that I chose to be on this committee. I think if you look back over the meetings and hearings that we've had, you'll find my attendance has been good. I think one thing we will all agree upon, rural or urban, is that our most precious commodity is time as MLAs, and if I did not respect the process, I would not give of my time as I have done: the miles and travel, et cetera. As you're aware, I traveled to Regina; I traveled to Victoria, to Winnipeg in an attempt to find out information. So I do fully respect the process. So I don't want anyone to think that I do not, because I certainly do.

So in that regard, I think what we have here is a newspaper article which perhaps is somewhat unfortunate, but I think that in all honesty my actions have spoken far louder than any words that may have occurred in print. In fact, I even showed up at the hearings that we held on Monday and Tuesday to continue

the hearings process that we went through there.

So again, if you feel I have been too open in my comments and I've offended you, I offer my apologies.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Frank. There's just one observation I want to make, and it relates back to your comment regarding the discussion which occurred on November 15. You're correct; when we did deal with a newspaper article of some days earlier, you were not present at that meeting. I did undertake at the committee to raise the matter with you, which I believe I did. I know that on numerous occasions since then I've commented at public hearings, as I believe some of you have, that it is very important that people understand, that the presenters understand, that we have not made any final conclusions as a committee, that we're in the hearing part of the process, and that until we've heard from all presenters, we as a committee will not sit down to begin our deliberations.

Okay, anyone else?

MR. DAY: Well, if I could comment, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate what Frank has said in terms of being a rookie and being new at something, and certainly all of us know what that's all about. Speaking in the House or representing the government or your party, especially as a rookie, can be a terrifying experience. You feel like you're not acquainted with the way things should go, and a person can make mistakes. I think I say that recognizing that we've probably all goofed at different times, maybe embarrassed ourselves in the House or at a public meeting just over protocol issues. So in registering my concern, I certainly took those things into account and certainly was sensitive to that.

But the difficulty arises from the fact that this is an issue that has been constantly brought forward very diligently by the chairman at virtually every public meeting I can remember, in terms of the chairman taking great pains to explain to people that we haven't made up our minds. As a matter of fact, I can remember many times in meetings a presenter saying to us, "What do you think?" And again the chairman interrupting and saying, "We are out listening." So I can't, unfortunately, accept the fact that it's just a slip made by a rookie in an unfamiliar situation.

We live in a day, worldwide, of high political mistrust by people. The individuals out there, either in eastern Europe or western democracies, are in a place, for whatever reason – we can speculate on that at a later time – where they have a high degree of mistrust for the people in elected positions or positions of authority. There was a column, I think just today or yesterday, in one of the newspapers up here dealing with that very subject, and here we are with something as serious as electoral redistribution, so serious that a select committee of the Legislature was struck to go out there and hear from people their ideas on how we can look at redistribution. So we've already got an inherent mistrust of the system in people's minds, and then we have what I continue to see to be violations of the system and of protocol in the extreme, and it only has served, as my sense is, to accentuate that perception out there.

Frank's comments have been raised at public meetings. I understood it came up again yesterday. It certainly came up in Hanna at the meeting. There have been phone calls. I don't think we can underestimate the magnitude of the feeling of violation, I think, that people feel out there. I think it's severe, and if we could speculate for a minute, should this committee

come up with recommendations, as is our mandate – and I hope we do come up with recommendations – if the recommendations were perceived by people in the rural community to be against what they wanted, then the possibility of them really saying: "You know, this thing was cooked right from the start because look, here it is. Look at the comments made by at least this one member, Frank Bruseker. Look at the comments. This thing was decided beforehand." I just see the possibility of some very large problems.

I want to hear what the other members around the table have to say in terms of what we should do, if there's any way at all it can be rectified. I'm not using it at all as a personal attack. It's now a matter of principle, and I do have to say I feel somewhat insulted when somebody says to me, "If you think I've done wrong, then I'm sorry." That's tantamount to saying, "If you're so narrow or immature that you can't accept what I've done, then I guess I'll spit out the word 'sorry' and try and pacify you." If I reflect back, I think it was 1973 as Richard Nixon faced a nation on the eve of his impeachment. You know, I remember so clearly that he said the words "if I've done wrong, then I'm sorry," and a nation said: "Nuts to you, Richard. Don't come at us saying, 'If I've done wrong, then, you poor, immature people, I'll throw out this little apology.'"

I see this as a very serious offence. On the one hand, Frank, you say that you apologize. On the other hand, you've said that you don't believe you have compromised this process. It is severely compromised. I'll look to other comments from members around the table.

MS BARRETT: Well, Stock, I'd like to pick up where you left off on the issue of the process being compromised. I don't think it's any secret that a couple of political parties have made presentations at a number of hearings, and there does tend to be a certain orientation from one political party compared to another compared to another. So I'm not sure there's anything that's secret about that. In turn, one has to respect that all of us live with a certain amount of subjectivity and can't go into any process with pure objectivity. It just doesn't exist in our form of being. Therefore, I don't know that expression of a view is that serious a violation. I think the issue here is that we agreed to try not to do that at the outset. If we had not agreed, I can't see that any element has been violated, when it comes to the terms of reference of the committee.

Finally, you said that people have called up or objected to Frank's comments in some of the public hearings lately and you would think it unfortunate if they thought the whole thing was predetermined and cooked up, right? Like, you used the words "cooked up." Well, just logically alone that could not be the case, given that ultimately we will vote on certain issues. It will come to votes. I find it stretching assumptions a bit too far to assume that one person's vote is actually going to sway the whole committee. Now, that's not to suggest that all of us should go out and say where we stand at this moment. The idea, of course, was to listen as well. I mean, you walk in with certain assumptions, and the idea is to go out and see if those assumptions are to be borne out by popular support or not. That's just natural. It's one thing to talk about an agreement we have not to express our personal views, but I think it's another to question whether or not the entire process has been ruined by it. I would suggest that the latter is not the case.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, if I can just respond. I'm not saying the process is ruined; I said it's severely compromised. I

appreciate your comments, Pam, but I think you missed the point in the area of being compromised. You said that even members of certain political parties have made presentations. They certainly have. NDP, Liberals, and PCs have been very clear and up-front in coming and saying, "Here's what I represent, and here's my presentation." But that's the people coming to the committee.

MS BARRETT: Right.

MR. DAY: It's entirely different when you have a member commenting that some arguments they don't accept at all. That is so insensitive as to be almost unthinkable that a person could say that. That's the level of comment we've had made publicly, that people out there, Albertans, have been told already by a member of this panel that they don't even accept their arguments.

MS BARRETT: But, Stockwell . . . If I can, Mr. Chairman, let me just point out that there are a couple of things I have made pretty clear during the hearings that I don't accept at all, and it's been obvious by the way I've asked questions of the presenters. I won't specify the notion, but it's pretty clear there are some things all of us have an attitude about or a predetermined view about that probably and reasonably need not change or could not reasonably be construed to be subject to change because of the particular orientation you might have. So we're all guilty of that. We've all done it. You see what I'm getting at?

MR. DAY: I don't agree that we're guilty to the degree we're talking about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of the reasons I thought it important to have Michael Ritter with us tonight is so we get a very clear set of principles as enunciated in *Erskine May* and *Beauchesne* and in our standing rules in terms of how we are to conduct ourselves in a select special committee hearing process. Would the committee now like to hear from Michael on that? All right; let's do that.

MR. RITTER: Mr. Chairman, I should let all members know, too, that I've done this at the request of the chairman, and I've also had discussions with Mr. Bruseker about that, so he's aware of this.

I just prepared something very short. I hope it'll explain the rules that we're dealing with here. Parliamentary sources such as *Beauchesne* and *Erskine May* cite numerous references with regard to members' responsibilities in committee. It is important to note that the full Assembly's privileges extend to committees, and as such members should be aware that the committee, like the House, retains complete authority over its own proceedings and publication thereof. In addition, the House reserves unto itself the absolute right to be the first body informed of the conclusions of one of its committees. Speculating as to the deliberations or conclusions of the committee before it has had a chance to report undermines the democratic process and diminishes respect for the institution. Publication of details of committee proceedings or of evidence given before the committee, specifically where publication has been forbidden or evidence has been given in private, may constitute a contempt. *Beauchesne*, citation 877(1), reads as follows:

No act done at any committee should be divulged before it has been reported to the House. Upon this principle the House of

Commons of the United Kingdom, on April 21, 1937, resolved "That the evidence taken by any select committee of this House and the documents presented to such committee and which have not been reported to the House, ought not to be published by any member of such committee or by any other person". The publication of proceedings of committees conducted with closed doors or of reports of committees before they are available to Members will, however, constitute a breach of privilege.

I'd also refer members to *Erskine May*, 21st edition, pages 86, 122 through 124, and 636 through 637. These references give a more detailed account of the nature of contempt by relating any aspect of committee proceedings, including evidence, deliberations, and speculations on the conclusions of the committee, to outsiders before the committee has made its final report. I'd urge all members to read these citations because they may involve possible breaches of privilege, which is a very serious matter.

That's the background.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Mike.  
Yes, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Well, Michael, it seems to me that what we're talking about is not a prerelease of a conclusion that's been made by this committee, and therefore your first citation doesn't affect this discussion.

MR. RITTER: It may well be. I should inform members that I was working off materials which were sent to me by the chairman and dealt with the various concerns raised by him as to what has actually happened. As to the facts of the situation, those are up to committee members to provide. I basically was given a frame of reference by the chairman and asked to research the rules relevant to that.

MS BARRETT: Sure; that's fine. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

MRS. BLACK: Well, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate, Michael, you going through that, because I'm also a rookie, and you don't always see everything. But I do have some concern. I can't state the exact quote in the paper, but when I saw the quote in the paper it went something to the effect that the 25 percent rule was there and all of their arguments were invalid or inappropriate. I've forgotten whether it was invalid or inappropriate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was reluctant to have Bob distribute hoards of material which have been prepared, but a look at that . . .

MRS. BLACK: "All other arguments are invalid." We're still in the hearing process. I do find that disturbing. I find it kind of affects the credibility of not only the committee but the other members on the committee, in the fact that from what I understood - and correct me if I'm wrong; please do - when you were put on a select committee within the House, you were sent there by your party not only because they thought you were the best person for the job, but they were saying to the Legislature that they had the faith in you to act in the best interests of the Legislature. That's what I thought a select committee was all about.

I further thought that we were supposed to be putting our

partisan activities aside when we assumed this role working as a committee and that we weren't to be the Progressive Conservative, necessarily, with that thought, or the Liberal with that thought, or the NDP with that thought. We were to be members of that committee, and we were to work as such. At the end of our hearings we were to come with some conclusions from this public hearing process. So I find it's a little disturbing for myself, personally, because I don't want my own credibility as a member to be placed in some jeopardy over a hearing process. I do feel, however, we did agree that we would collectively at the end of the hearing process - and I want to stress that: at the end of the hearings - we would sit down and deliberate and come up with some conclusions and present that. I do find that somewhat out of sync a little bit, and so I am disturbed with it.

I suppose I wouldn't have been as disturbed with it had it not been in the paper during the hearing process. I know yesterday in Waskatenau I felt a little uncomfortable when the one fellow brought it up, and earlier in the day in Barrhead I felt quite uncomfortable when the audience asked Frank and Tom and I as urban MLAs if we were really working in the interests of all of Alberta and could really appreciate the thoughts of rural people. I felt a little uncomfortable about that, and I thought, well, surely to goodness they realize we're on this committee to do just that. That bothered me because I really haven't had my own personal credibility questioned in that fashion, and that disturbs me. So I am disturbed with it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.  
Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of things. I can remember in the first session of the Legislature under heat of debate I got up one night and attacked a number of people in the Assembly. I attacked them on the basis of the information I had, and it turned out later that the information was incorrect. The following day I apologized to the Assembly, and it was accepted, and we got on with the work of the Assembly. It was tough having to apologize. It was very difficult. But sometimes when you're caught up in the heat of debate and the moment, you can make a slip.

Now, I've looked at the article. It's unfortunate that the coverage has taken the direction it has. But I look at the last paragraph of the article and it says that the MLA is his party's critic for Economic Development and Trade, Career Development and Employment, Tourism, and Technology, Research and Telecommunications. Discussions covered the province's support for high technology companies that recently went bust, Peter Pocklington's former companies, the use of lottery funds, lending practices of the Alberta Opportunity Company, and tourism.

Obviously it also touched upon, to the degree that the reporter, Brian Mazza, wanted it to, rural seats and redistribution. Now, when Frank opened today with his statement, he said that he did not believe or intend his remarks to be hurtful. I think that's an apology. In the course of a discussion, of a long discussion, I don't know at what point the topic of electoral boundaries came up. It was probably the first; that's why the committee was there. Is it possible, though, that the reporter could have at some point said, "Oh, by the way, what do you think of this," during the course of other discussions? I think we have an apology before us. I know that we certainly have a lot of work before us. I would hope that we're going to accept the incidents as unfortunate, accept the apology as sincere, and get on with

the work that we've got to complete.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Bob. I guess I am, too, a rookie MLA, and I make mistakes. I think I would probably accept Frank's apology, but it has created more uncertainty in rural Alberta where I travel, at least in the north. I know that as articles like this come out, if we don't stop doing that, we are going to continue getting the strong requests that we have to continue with the hearing process. I know I passed on your phone number and address to a lot of people across the north and around Edmonton that wanted to continue with the hearing process. I think we could probably, you know, excuse this as long as we can deal with the issue, the problems it's created. I'd be willing to. If Albertans are happy that we've had enough hearings and are reasonably happy that we are out there to listen to the people, I would say, yes, I would accept the apology. I think we've got to satisfy the need or uncertainties, at least to some extent, that it's created out there in addition to what we had before, because it has done so much.

MS BARRETT: What are you suggesting here, Mike? Are you saying that, you know, half a million people in northern Alberta have read an article that appeared in a rural weekly called the *Mountaineer* in your riding and we now need to go back and listen to these people to assure them that the committee did not predetermine the outcome of our hearings?

MR. CARDINAL: No, I'm not saying half a million people read the paper, but you have to realize, Pam, that when you're dealing with . . . You know, I work very closely with municipalities; for an example, MDs, IDs, and the counties. They do have provincial meetings and discuss specifically issues like this, because they have a major concern on the potential outcome which passes on from one end of the province to the other. They're very, very well informed, and it's the municipal councils and councillors who have called me about the situation. They're well informed.

MS BARRETT: How many?

MR. CARDINAL: I would say at least 20 to 30 people have called me personally. Now, I don't know if they've gone ahead and written letters yet or have called Bob or what, but that's . . .

MS BARRETT: Well, can I have a supplementary, Mr. Chairman? How does going back into areas we've already been in clear up any possible perception that there's a predetermined outcome here when we've got a majority of the committee who have never so much as uttered a word about our individual orientation on the matter and when we haven't even begun the discussions? I mean, how does this help? I don't . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just for clarification, did you intend it to be areas we've already been in?

MR. CARDINAL: Oh, no. Absolutely not. I would never want to suggest that we go back to Slave Lake, because we had a hearing there, I was there, and it was fine. We went through the process. I'm suggesting, you know, possibly areas where we haven't held hearings yet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, as it now stands, we have a commitment to get back into Wainwright. We were unable to go to Wainwright on Monday afternoon because of the fog. That is the only formal commitment we have at this point in time. We have a number of requests by other communities for additional hearings, communities that haven't had hearings in their constituency. Stettler, I think, is one with . . . What is it? Can you give us the figures, Bob, for Stettler and Dunvegan in particular?

MR. PRITCHARD: Well, Stettler's had quite a number, probably 20, 21, 22. Dunvegan's had 10, 11, 12.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, these are in addition to the people from Stettler and Dunvegan who came to other constituencies to make presentations?

MR. PRITCHARD: Yes, because they're saying they haven't made presentations. They want the opportunity to make them. We've also had media calls from there.

MR. SIGURDSON: How many others and how many locations?

MR. PRITCHARD: The others are scattered around - four, five, six. We've had some from Athabasca-Lac La Biche. We've had some . . . I'm not really clear on some of the numbers. Westlock's given us some.

MR. CARDINAL: People have called me from Westlock.

MR. PRITCHARD: We've had some from Bow Valley.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, before we move into discussion on the area of requests for meetings - it may be that we can lead into that - just before we leave the situation here . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: But we're not finished.

MR. DAY: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're not finished, because I do have a statement I wish to read into the record. But there seemed to be a flow into this from Mike and Pam asking questions, and I thought I'd better clarify the one certain commitment we do have with Wainwright and then the requests from other areas: how we as a committee intend to deal with them.

MR. DAY: Okay. Just some remarks to clarify my feelings in terms of what's happened with Frank's comments here. First of all, I am surprised Pam seems to be backpedaling somewhat. When I brought this issue to the meeting - the date I don't have, but Bob Pritchard might have it - you seemed to agree with my concerns about what had happened.

MS BARRETT: Yes, I do.

MR. DAY: I don't know if you've changed that or not.

MS BARRETT: No, that's not true, Stockwell. I'm going to interrupt you there. I certainly do agree that members of a committee dealing with a sensitive issue like this should not in

general express their own points of view prior to the committee making certain decisions. On the other hand, I just don't think it is as serious as you suggested, and at the last meeting when you said you were tempted to sponsor a motion about this matter, I said I can't support that and I'm going to try to dissuade you from that. What I'm trying to do right now is point out all the logical reasons you shouldn't proceed with a motion. That is that, first of all, the numbers don't warrant; one member stating his point of view on a matter is not tantamount to the entire committee supporting that point of view, in the first instance. In the second instance, we all are subjective creatures in this place; we walk in with certain assumptions. The idea is to see if people can dissuade us from some of those assumptions and maybe make the group work together in a way that we come up with a unanimous report. This is the stated desire, as I recall from our first official meeting.

So I'm not backpedaling, and I don't think you should make this issue personal, Stock. I'm telling you that I'm making a case to prevent you from going to a certain motion to have Frank taken off this committee by motion of the Assembly, period.

MR. DAY: Okay. Well, I just wanted to clarify that, that I felt you shared the concern about the seriousness of it. Obviously you don't feel it serious enough for a motion to go forward, and you expressed that when we met last.

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. DAY: And there's no sense in me prolonging the debate on how serious each of us around the table thinks it is. As I've said, I think it's very serious. Tom, you mentioned an incident when you apologized in the House, and I remember that incident very clearly. My estimation of you went up half a point or two.

MR. SIGURDSON: You even sent me a note.

MR. DAY: Yes, I think I probably did. But the difference there was that you said, "In retrospect, what I said was wrong; therefore I apologize, because what I did was wrong." That is entirely different than saying, "If I did something wrong, then I'm sorry." I don't want anybody here to think I'm pressing for an extraction of an apology. I'm not. I'm simply stating the situation that has happened, and it's more than just a slip.

As I've already stated, we've got comments here. First of all, Frank suggested the number of seats go "from 41 to 35." Then he's quoted as saying he's dismissing all kinds of arguments. Then he goes on to suggest even certain cities, what will happen in Medicine Hat, St. Albert, Edmonton, Calgary, and southern Alberta: just letting all those people know what he thinks about their views and what's going to happen to them specifically. Then he goes on to impute the motives of the government and possibly people on the committee, saying: "Tories like having the larger numbers of rural seats. 'Every seat lost' through redistribution, 'is one Tory seat lost.'"

I'll close my comments by saying it's very severe in my view. It is not personal. I can feel the same about Frank as I've always felt about him. I don't have to say what that is. It is not personal. I'm not emotionally wrapped up in it. I'm saying there's been very serious damage done to the integrity of the process, and people out there are concerned.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else?

Then I'd like to conclude on this subject by reading into the record the following: all members are reminded that in this committee they are not to, one, speak to any non committee member about committee proceedings except in the most general terms; two, speculate to any person about the deliberations or possible conclusions of the committee until the committee's report has been presented to the House; three, report any matter to anyone outside the committee which has been considered by the committee in private or in camera or where the committee or the House has forbidden publication or comment; and four, disclose anything in the final report of the committee before it has been presented to the House. The above guidelines are important for all members to follow, and respecting the rules and privileges of the committee are responsibilities of each member. This statement will serve as guidance to all members in their obligations to this committee.

In other words, while we enter this phase of our work, there will be increased pressure on us, some by our constituents, some by members of the media, some by other interested parties, to gain from us or glean from us a comment on what we will do. We all know the sensitivity of the subject matter. The fact that we as a committee are dealing with an issue of such great magnitude, not only to the rural parts of the province but to the urban areas as well, cannot be underestimated, so I urge all members to exercise great caution in how you handle yourself with those outside the committee. We will have ample opportunity to roll up our sleeves and address the task with the greatest amount of vigour around this table.

Unless anyone feels a strong compulsion to go further, let that be the end of the issue.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, if I may just ask a question for point of clarification to Parliamentary Counsel. Is my understanding correct in saying that any member of this committee - I'm putting this hypothetically at this point - could at any time bring to the attention of the House what they would consider to be a breach of privilege? It would not require a unanimous vote of this committee. Is that correct?

MR. RITTER: What the procedure is under the Standing Orders is that the member must first bring the complaint of privilege, if the incident occurs within the committee, to the attention of the chairman. The chairman is then obliged to shut down the committee, adjourn it, and bring it to the attention of the House on behalf of the member who complained.

MR. DAY: So one member could put that thing in motion.

MR. RITTER: Via the chairman of the committee, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Are we ready to move on?

MS BARRETT: Sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. We have an outstanding commitment in Wainwright. We have other requests coming in. What is the wish of the committee? Yes, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Well, might I suggest that with respect to Wainwright we live up to that commitment and at least get the subcommittee down there as soon as possible. With the other requests, as the process has been ongoing for nearly six months and we had originally determined that the last of our hearings

was going to be, I think, the end of February, and we are under an obligation by way of the motion that passed the House to get this done in the spring sitting and the desire expressed was the earlier the better, suggest to those people requesting hearings that they put their concerns in writing and give them a new deadline of, say, March 16 I think is a Friday, or something like that. Phone them back and get them to write us, even in point form, the submissions they would otherwise give to us orally and have those copied and sent to every member of the committee. Then by the following week, you know, we've made our deadlines clear and now we can actually start our deliberations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. It's a suggestion or a motion?

MS BARRETT: Well, I don't think we need a formal motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess we haven't had formal motions in terms of others.

MS BARRETT: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Let's discuss it informally. Pam is suggesting that we hold the hearing in Wainwright and that we invite all others who request hearings in their areas – and I'm assuming we're primarily talking about those constituencies that have not been covered – to submit their feelings in writing to the committee. Any comment on that suggestion?

MRS. BLACK: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think we definitely have to go to Wainwright. We made that commitment, and we've said at two or three meetings since then that we would go back. But thinking back, we said as a committee that if the numbers warrant it, we would attend public hearings, and if we have submissions or requests, I think we're obligated to hear those people at public forums. We made that commitment. That was part of the mandate and the job we were given, to go out and consult. You know, we said that we were going to hold public hearings within our committee. We established that right from the beginning. You said Dunvegan and . . .

MR. PRITCHARD: Dunvegan and Stettler in particular.

MRS. BLACK: I think we have to honour that role. I think, particularly with what we've heard at the last couple of things of concern about the rural people feeling we've drawn some preconceived ideas, we have to show through our own credibility as a committee that we are in fact prepared to hear people. I really would wrestle with turning down someone from Dunvegan that had X number of people request a meeting. I think that would be a very, very poor showing on the part of the committee. And hopefully we could do them in a timely fashion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Tom first, then Pam.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree that we have an obligation to hear all Albertans that want to have input. I think by making an invitation to those who have contacted this office or any of us, to advise them that they have the opportunity to write in, should be sufficient. I say that for a couple of reasons. One is that at the very start we started with a number of meetings throughout the province, and I think at that time we had 17 or 18. Those increased – we had 18 to start? – and now we've accommodated more and more folk over the course of

time. We've gone back.

When we speak of having, from a couple of areas, some 21 folk in Stettler who want to make presentations, 12 people in Dunvegan who want to make presentations, I've got to ask the question: how is it that they didn't make a presentation before? Now, I know we had a problem with the delay of mail when we first went up to the Peace River country, and that's why we went back to Donnelly. When we went to Barrhead in order to accommodate the constituency of Barrhead, quite frankly, I believe with due respect that most of the folk that came out to make a presentation made a presentation that would be better presented to a commission, not to this committee, because I don't believe too many dealt with the terms of reference of this committee. They were trying to defend the boundaries of the constituency. So when I see great numbers of folk – 12 in Dunvegan, 21 in Stettler – coming forward to ask to be heard, I think maybe what they're asking us is to look at the boundaries of the constituency. Maybe what they're doing is trying to defend the existing boundaries. And there's no problem with that. But that's something that should be focused to the commission. If we find that they write in and say, "Look, we've got something very specific to deal with with the composition of the committee and it's very important," then maybe a special trip.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam is next, but Pat wants in on that point.

MS BARRETT: Go ahead.

MRS. BLACK: Just on that point, Tom, I guess the thing that concerns me is, you know, last Monday we returned to Calgary after we had spent, I believe, three days . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Four.

MRS. BLACK: . . . four times in Calgary. We made a special trip to Calgary to hear one group make a presentation, and a lot of their presentation had to do with boundaries themselves as opposed to, say, philosophy necessarily. But they tied the two together, and I think their presentation was unique by nature and allowed us to ask some questions there. I think it was valuable. So we went back for one group. We made a special effort to go to Calgary last Monday, and we've got 12 people in Dunvegan that I think should have the same opportunity as one group in Calgary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I know we went back on Monday to Calgary. God, I know. I spent hours driving . . .

MRS. BLACK: I know.

MR. SIGURDSON: . . . to get to Hanna and then home. To be blunt, the position made by the presenters was one that I believe was outside the mandate of the committee. You know, that's one that should be taken to their provincial body and one that should be taken to the appropriate department or the appropriate ministry. It wasn't one that we are going to be able to resolve on their behalf.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom, we didn't know that in advance.

MR. SIGURDSON: No, we didn't know that in advance, and that's . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We knew we had a request by a major body . . .

MRS. BLACK: And we honoured it.

MR. SIGURDSON: And we honoured it. That's the point, you see, that we honoured it, but we're also getting to a point where I think we're going to have a lot of people start to defend the boundaries. I would just submit, Mr. Chairman: let's get on with the work we've got; let's honour the commitment we have to Wainwright; let's invite those people that have contacted the office to send in the stuff; let's establish the commission right away so we can get those folk in Dunvegan and Stettler to go out there and defend their boundaries.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Pam and Frank. You've got to be brief.

MS BARRETT: Okay. What I was going to add after Pat first spoke was that we can always use any precedent to suggest that we have to carry on once it's been established, once it's occurred. That's its own tight form of logic. What I'm getting at is that that could go on forever. In other words, if we go to Dunvegan or the next place or whatever, then we'll have people from Peace River, let's say a small community somewhere. It can go on and on, and every time they can say, "Aha, but you went back to so and so," or, "You added such and such a place." So there's no natural conclusion to that. My suggestion is that we could even advertise in all the rural weeklies: "Here's your one last kick at the cat; here are our parameters. Do you have a suggestion that you want to make for our consideration? Please keep in mind that a commission will be established." We could probably even predetermine, if we wanted to deal with a motion at any point, to recommend that the commission would have to have public hearings, which it has had in the past. We could do that at any time and then tell people in the form of that ad, "You will get a chance to talk about your specific boundaries when this commission is struck," et cetera, et cetera. Because otherwise there is no natural conclusion to the process, you see.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Pam has said most of what I wanted to say. The other thing I would just mention is that as you look at the map, although we haven't gotten into every constituency, I think we've made a point of going so that every neighbouring constituency is covered. We tried to minimize the distances people did have to travel.

The other thing I think is a concern is that our mandate is to table our report this session of the Legislature; in other words, the spring sitting. If we delay our deliberations process by adding more hearings, we may not be able to fulfill that mandate, and I think that's a prime mandate we must address.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Stock.

MR. DAY: I'd like to say something first of all so everybody understands the tone of my remarks, given the first issue we

addressed. I've been meaning to add that I'm impressed with the vigour with which this committee has gone about its task, and I say that to all the members. Because we've had, I believe, a meeting schedule which I don't think any other committee in the last few years could keep up with.

MS BARRETT: Hear, hear.

MR. DAY: It was a pace that quite frankly was brutal with all our other commitments we had, and we really gave ourselves to that task. I think Tom and Frank in particular probably attended more meetings than I did. So I think there's no questioning our commitment to the task.

We had indicated that if numbers warranted, we would try and see people. I am just concerned about asking people in these rural areas especially to simply now write in their remarks. I use the example of going to Calgary. I was not in favour of that, that we go down there for one presentation. We've been there for three or four, and every Calgary presentation I was at there were far fewer people in attendance than at any of the rural ones. I was opposed to going there, yet we did go back there. I'm concerned about the reaction we would get, especially from rural areas as they perceive that we made a special trip to Calgary to hear one presentation and we'd already been to that city three or four times. Now we say to these other people in these outlying areas, "Just write yours in"? I'm concerned about the reaction we'd face with that. I think we need to show good faith.

I agree with you, Pam. Obviously this could be extended ad infinitum. We don't want to do that, but we've got some very clear requests that came in well before this date at which we now sit, and I think we need to show our concern for the democratic process, especially as I feel it's been somewhat impinged on this committee because of the other situation here with Frank. I think we've got to go the extra mile, if I can say that literally, or the extra kilometre. I don't want to do it. My kids are already saying to me . . .

MS BARRETT: "Who are you?"

MR. DAY: Yes. They're saying, "Dad, you're being redistributed; never mind the boundaries." I don't think we have to extend it ad infinitum, but I think we've got to honour these requests to go and see these folks. I guess I could leave it just with a question. What's the problem? Is there a fear that someone's out to extend this into infinity? We've got a number of places we've got to go to. I say: what's the problem?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead. First Pam, then Pat.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. Yeah, Stock, that is the issue. First of all, I can't travel. The House starts to sit tomorrow, and I'm stuck here. So if you go back out on the road, I suspect it's going to have to be a subcommittee.

Now, Bob, I need to ask something of you before I proceed. This sheet that I just got in front of me: are these the areas requested?

MR. PRITCHARD: That's correct.

MS BARRETT: Can you tell us how many individuals from each of these ridings have requested public hearings?

MR. PRITCHARD: I can't right now; it's difficult. Some are by letter, a lot are by telephone, and some are through media people who have called and made comments like, why aren't we going to their particular area?

MR. DAY: Pam, just on that point.

MS BARRETT: You see, this is precisely the issue I wanted to get at, though, Stock. Theoretically, we could go to 83 ridings and do them all two or three times. I think we have to state – I mean, we are already beyond the deadline that we all agreed to in terms of public hearings. We've extended them; we've gone back. We've gone the extra mile already. How many more times and over what period of time would we consider expanding that committee largesse, you know?

MR. DAY: Well, unless I'm mistaken, we haven't gone back to Whitecourt; we haven't even been there yet. I don't think we've been to Westlock-Sturgeon. I know we haven't been to Wainwright. We haven't been to Stettler.

MS BARRETT: But that's my point. Our idea was not to go to all 83 ridings, if you get my drift.

MR. DAY: Right. We're trying to make it geographically convenient.

MS BARRETT: Accessible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's one thing. I haven't done any correlation with our map, because I've just seen the list, but it seems to me that most of these ridings, although possibly not all, fall below the minus 25 percent factor. That may in itself explain why there's a greater interest.

MS BARRETT: Not St. Albert.

MR. DAY: It goes above, though.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I said "most."

MS BARRETT: Yeah; okay.

MR. DAY: And St. Albert's above.

MS BARRETT: Well above.

MR. CHAIRMAN: St. Albert is above, yeah. Bow Valley, Dunvegan – what's Drumheller's? I'm just looking at the map behind me.

MR. SIGURDSON: It's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Drumheller's all right. Stettler is below. Wainwright is below. Westlock-Sturgeon is probably okay.

MR. SIGURDSON: It's okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Whitecourt is below.

MR. SIGURDSON: It's just under.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's just under. And I think Rocky Moun-

tain House is okay.

MR. DAY: No, it's below.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's under too.

So six of the nine are ridings which feel threatened, in part because of the way our letter, with the attached map, is drafted.

MR. DAY: Just further to that, Mr. Chairman, on that point if I can. When we were in Hanna . . . Where were we that day?

MS BARRETT: If it's Tuesday, it must be . . .

MR. DAY: Right; it's just a blur.

When we were there, I was struck by the fact that people were still upset by their last electoral redistribution out there, which was how many years ago? Fifteen years ago?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Between 1975 and '79.

MR. DAY: Yeah, some 15 years ago. They're still emotionally distraught over what happened. Most of these that are requesting that we come are in danger of some kind of redistribution, and I just think there's too much at stake in terms of the whole democratic process for us to say, "Forget it."

MS BARRETT: Well, what's your deadline? I mean, give us a proposal then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MS BARRETT: Sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it is a response. And then Pat, Frank, and Tom.

MR. DAY: Well, I'll just toss out fodder for us to chew on. I appreciate what Pam is saying about her duties while session is on, and I don't think it would be fair for us to try and dump more on her or any of us. I'll bow to that concern. Then that would mean sometime over the summer period, maybe into early fall if you want to look at September 15 or the end of September as a date we can throw out there. I'll toss out early fall in terms of trying to get this cleared up. But I just don't think we can ignore these people, especially from what I heard from people saying that it happened 15 years ago in Hanna.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I've got Frank and then Tom, then Pam.

MR. BRUSEKER: I would disagree with the early fall recommendation, partly because of the way our committee was structured in the first place, that we are to report this time around. So I think it precludes that.

I guess a question I'd throw out to you, Bob. I don't know which Bob can address this better. There are nine constituencies listed here that have made requests. Looking at it from a time framework, how could we possibly fit this in while the sitting is in, other than having to neglect our duties in the Legislature? I would have a serious concern about that because I think that is primarily the reason we're elected, to represent people in the Legislature. To abandon our constituents to look after this, I think, is a conflicting notion. So while I agree we should try to hear as many people as possible – and I think we have done that



quite well, with hearings all over the place – I can't agree with the concept of postponing this until fall to complete our hearings process.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Chairman, if I can just follow up, I think the motion is highlighted there, and it does say that we must report [not recorded]

... it does not recommend any changes, then the government must create a commission based on the current legislation [which is 42-41] as a result of the sunset clause built into the amendment now before the Assembly.

So I think that puts the time line pretty clearly. We have this spring session to report our recommendations.

With respect to the people who live in the constituencies outlined on this sheet. Bow Valley: we were in the three neighbouring constituencies. While I don't recall having anybody from the Bow Valley constituency come to any of those hearings . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Medicine Hat.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you; I stand corrected. We were there a number of times. In fact, in Hanna we went back a second time to hear people, and there would have been opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just for clarification, from the end of the Bow Valley riding to Hanna is about a two-hour drive.

MR. SIGURDSON: And the president of the sugar beet association drove from Lethbridge to Hanna to make his presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: From Taber.

MR. SIGURDSON: Taber. I just saw the business card that said Lethbridge.

MR. CHAIRMAN: His residence is in Taber.

MR. SIGURDSON: There you go. Okay. So if the matter is important, you gets out and you does your business.

With Drumheller, mid range: I think we would have a number of people coming out and arguing to maintain the existing boundaries. With St. Albert the mayor and council appeared before the Edmonton hearing, and it's certainly not a two-hour drive from St. Albert to Edmonton. Stettler: we had representation in Hanna, and we had representation in Edmonton as well from people who came out from Stettler. Wainwright we have a commitment to. Westlock-Sturgeon: again, we were on either side, and the MLA for that constituency presented his remarks in Edmonton. I wonder if going out would do any good. Whitecourt: we had a meeting in Edson.

The only one that I suppose I've got any degree of sympathy for is Dunvegan, and the only reason I've got a degree of sympathy for the Dunvegan constituency is because of the foul-up we had with respect to the late delivery of the post into the Peace River country. Now, having said that there was some problem with the mail, on our first date we had very few people out in High Level and Peace River, and that was because there wasn't sufficient notice. The very next day we had a very large turnout in Grande Prairie. But the only one that I really have a great deal of sympathy for is the Dunvegan constituency. Everybody else, I believe there was sufficient notice given, and

there were people from their constituencies who did make representations to this committee at one location or another.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, just very briefly. I know the time has gone, and we've got to go. Let me suggest this as a scenario to the members here: it says very clearly in *Hansard* here that we are required to report to the first sitting. It goes on to say "a new type of legislation" and things like that. And then it's going to be

incumbent upon the government to bring that legislation before a fall sitting, or a spring sitting . . . but no later than the end of the second session.

If we are to bring forward a report, it's not saying here what that report has to say. We could, as a suggestion, bring forward an interim report saying: "Here's what we found to date. We're also reporting to the Legislature that there are eight more meetings to go to, and there is a report filed. Those are done." And the work could still be completed. [interjection] Right.

Even the one that Tom just brought out to me says: "The select special committee shall report and make recommendations to the Assembly during the first sitting."

MR. SIGURDSON: Of the Second Session. That's where we are.

MR. DAY: Right. So we still can made a report and make recommendations and still go out and complete the hearings. It doesn't say what the report has to say.

MR. SIGURDSON: With due respect, though, is that what it says at the bottom? His concluding remarks are:

So if the committee does not complete its work, it does not recommend any changes, then the government must create a commission based on the current legislation as a result of the sunset clause built into the amendment now before the Assembly.

So if we don't complete our work and report to the first sitting of the Second Session of the 22nd Legislature, we will have boundaries that are 42-41 and we've got a Charter challenge, or we've got some kind of challenge.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry; I have to make a phone call to explain why I'm not at a 6 o'clock meeting. Can I ask for about a four-minute break in our proceedings here?

[The committee recessed from 6:11 p.m. to 6:17 p.m.]

MS BARRETT: All right. Am I recognized then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, you are.

MS BARRETT: Okay. During our break it would appear that we've lost our ability to make a formal decision. So I'd like to go on record with notice of a motion that if the committee determines that the hearings in the ridings of Bow Valley, Dunvegan, Drumheller, St. Albert, Stettler, Wainwright, Westlock-Sturgeon, Whitecourt, and Rocky Mountain House are to be considered, members of this committee be directed to take time out of the House sitting to conduct those hearings in as timely a fashion as possible and that the hearings conclude no later than Wednesday, March 21, and that that constitutes the final set of hearings, period, so that on March 22, which is a Thursday, we can get down to the business we were mandated to do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So noted.

MS BARRETT: Nope.

MS BARRETT: Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We adjourn?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Notice of a motion to be dealt with Monday evening.

MR. SIGURDSON: So moved.

Any further business?

[The committee adjourned at 6:19 p.m.]