

[Chairman: Dr. Elliott]

[12:14 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to call the meeting to order, unless anybody has a better idea at this moment -- and I don't want to test that too far.

Let's take a look at the follow-up items we have before us. Number 1, from January 21, 1985, the committee is to discuss the officers' respective annual conferences for the year '85-86. That is the list Louise just handed to us. This item has been pushed back on two or three occasions, and maybe today we can zero in on it. We need some volunteers to identify their particular preferences.

DR. CARTER: At one stage you asked me to look at it a bit. I know that Mr. Miller and Mr. Hiebert are interested in going to Quebec City. I'm sure all of us are interested in going to Quebec City. Why don't we all go as a committee, support staff as well?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would certainly bring in some bilingual capabilities in our program, wouldn't it?

DR. CARTER: Those are two for Quebec City in July: Hiebert and Miller. I think we can send at least two, and then we'd have backups. I think you should go on the Whitehorse one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I tagged along with the Auditor on two previous occasions, and I'm quite prepared to go again. That seems to make sense.

DR. CARTER: Besides, you're a next-door neighbour to Whitehorse.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, but let's also have it understood that I've seen Whitehorse a couple of times. If anybody on the committee hasn't seen Whitehorse in July, I'd surely encourage them to . . .

DR. CARTER: Stay up all night.

MR. CHAIRMAN: See what the midnight sun really looks like.

DR. CARTER: With your job, Bill, can you get away to any of these things? With your role in

the Assembly, especially that legislative auditor thing . . .

MR. PURDY: I think I can get away in December, but I can't get away in June or July. I have to go to a conference at the end of June, and right now I'm working on getting enough time off and people to cover me for that one. So Quebec City and Whitehorse are out.

DR. CARTER: I think we can wait until later in the year for the other two in December. When we get the dates for them and with their being in Toronto and Chicago, they might run sequentially. The other reminder is that because of the horrendous amount of money they charge for the Comprehensive Auditing Foundation, we were thinking of sending only one person to that. But we might be able to send two to Government Ethics in Chicago. It would be useful to have two there because by then we'll have a new Chief Electoral Officer and it will be his first conference.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those were all very helpful comments. Thank you, David. Does anybody want to add to the discussion? Then I'm considering it agreed that we will work on the basis that Mr. Hiebert and Mr. Miller will be our delegates to the Canadian Ombudsman Conference, Quebec City, June 16 to 19. I will reserve the dates of July 7 to 11 to be in Whitehorse. Is there any further comment on item 1 of our follow-up items?

DR. CARTER: I suggest that either Mr. Thompson or Mr. Anderson accompany you to Whitehorse.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like that. That sounds good.

DR. CARTER: Then again, I trust we'll be able to have one meeting during session, so we can readjust a few things.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will try to hold meetings as frequently as required to adjust items that need adjusting.

DR. CARTER: Hopefully it wouldn't have to be too long; it would just be those housekeeping things if we have to shift on this. We're going

to have four of our members tied up with the Chief Electoral Officer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: While we're on that topic — we're switching now to future meetings and plans and so on. As far as I'm concerned, the meetings we will be holding while the House is sitting will be exactly as David said: we'll meet as required, just to keep on top of certain topics. If we call a couple of quickies occasionally, it'll be to keep up to date on some items. I find that I pay a lot of attention to this work, especially at meeting time, and in between meetings I'm on to something else. Items can slip by if we don't budget our time to at least review it once in a while. Thank you, David. I consider that item finished.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, maybe Bill has some ideas. I know you're terribly busy when we're in session, Bill. Have you any specific time when you could be best able to make the meetings? I know you're tied up.

MR. PURDY: The best time for me is Monday, right after 5:30 — and have it a dinner meeting, with something brought in. Tuesdays and Thursdays are just about fully booked through the session for other functions members should go to. If you look at your blue list, there are a number of activities during this session. It's difficult for me, but the easiest would be if we could hold it some evening just after the House rises and before we come back for the night sitting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Especially on Mondays.

MR. PURDY: Yes, as long as it doesn't conflict with any of the other members' commitments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have a committee that does the same thing, but they do it on a very regular basis. The odd time that we would likely do it, I would be available to be here. I would not feel badly about it, because my attendance at the other meeting is quite good.

DR. CARTER: Does that mean that Louise and Robert get paid overtime because they have to muck around later?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I assumed Mr. Purdy had that all under control when he made that suggestion.

MR. PURDY: I never thought about that. Well, Bob is different, because he has to be here in the evening anyway.

MR. BUBBA: I don't get overtime.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How about half an hour right after question period?

DR. CARTER: Let's give her the overtime. Let's ask Louise if she's prepared to do it.

MRS. EMPSON: It would be no problem.

DR. CARTER: We're talking about once or twice.

MR. BUBBA: It should be okay. The committee secretaries work a certain amount of overtime during session, anyway.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If it happens, I'm assuming it will be at a minimum. We're not going to try to build it into a structured time frame.

MRS. EMPSON: When the budget was prepared, there was some money allotted for overtime.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, you talked about the select committee for the Chief Electoral Officer. Has that been discussed? Is it going to be a small subcommittee of this committee?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's in your minutes, Bill. You can check it out there. It's in camera, and I think you'll find your answers there.

Anything else at the moment? We're deviating a bit. It's our objective to go through this list of follow-up items and, as soon as we can after 1 o'clock, retire to the Ombudsman's office.

Item 2: we have to approve the minutes of January 21, 1985. Is anyone prepared to make a motion?

AN HON. MEMBER: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any question on the motion? Those in favour? The motion is carried.

Item 3 is the same thing, the approval of the minutes of January 28.

DR. CARTER: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any question on the motion? Those in favour? That motion is carried.

I wish to introduce a new topic right now. I wish to ask for the committee's approval of a work day for your chairman on January 30, 1985.

AN HON. MEMBER: So moved.

AN HON. MEMBER: I don't know. What did he do?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It will appear in my extensive report.

DR. CARTER: Question, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those in favour? The motion is carried. Thank you very much.

Item 4: to obtain the missing attachment referred to in Mr. Henry Anderson's memo dealing with the International Ombudsman Institute. That is something I have to report on. I have a telephone slip from Dick Johnston's office, which says that they have no further information dealing with funding for this group. So I decided I should go back and talk directly with Mr. Johnston. Any time he was available, I was not, and when I was available, he was not. We're having an opportunity toward the last half of this week. The office system through which we obtained the letter we had at our last meeting did not provide what we asked for. Instead, I got this slip of paper. I don't know whether the minister dictated this little note that arrived at my desk or whether it was something that originated with his staff, but I will be following that up, one-on-one, with the minister. Are there any questions on that very brief comment on item 4?

DR. CARTER: Mr. Chairman, I think we can let that lapse from the minutes and just deal with it in due course. Then it won't need to be carried over on the agenda.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

I draw your attention to item 5: the chairman was to inquire into a current financial statement from the International Ombudsman Institute. David, you just made a comment with respect to item 4. The two are related.

DR. CARTER: Unless you have received such a document, and I assume from what you said that you haven't . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was putting a different interpretation on what you just said. I'm sorry about that.

I do have a report on item 5. My report is: I had a rather lengthy discussion with different people in government circles, to give me direction and guidance as to how to approach this. My discussion was primarily with Michael Clegg, as to what channels I as chairman should pursue this topic through. His answer was that the action is taken through the Department of Advanced Education, that all Alberta government funding for that particular project is through Advanced Education. There is no other funding. He questioned whether or not we as a committee had the right to go after that information. He said we could probably pursue it as individual members, particularly in Committee of Supply.

His advice to me, as chairman of this committee, was to come back to you people and discuss it for further guidance and direction. His recommendation was that I not pursue it at this point on the basis of the instruction I've had. From his point of view this committee should not be pushing in that area. At that point I saw fit to back off on that and not, as a committee chairman, go after that particular document.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, it would seem to me that there should be no problem with his disclosing to you the answer to this question you're asking.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're referring to the minister?

MR. MILLER: Yes. He should answer it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As I said in answer to number 4, I have yet to make that contact; I've been dealing with staff up to now. But I did make this additional contact with Mike Clegg for some guidance.

MR. MILLER: I'm talking about number 5.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

MR. MILLER: He has prepared the budget. The question says, "to inquire into a current financial statement from the International Ombudsman Institute" and where we fit into that aspect. Surely to goodness this isn't an embarrassing question to anybody. It's just a request for information.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The current financial statement — maybe it's an interpretation of what is involved. What we're asking for is literally to take a look at the books as they appeared at the end of the month or some such thing. Is that a current financial statement?

MR. MILLER: Yes, and along with that I would also ask what the intention — is he budgeting money for this organization in the '85-86 financial year?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have that answer in Dr. Anderson's memo from the last meeting, Bud. Dr. Anderson pointed out to us that the funding is on a three-year term, '85-86, and that the minister has budgeted for it and has committed his department's support for that. That was in his memo of December 31, which we handed out at the last meeting. So we know that the Hon. Dick Johnston (a) agreed to extend support to the institute for the additional three-year period, (b) approved the institute's request to increase support to \$50,000 annually, and (c) confirmed the grant for 1983-84. As a condition of the grant the institute is to provide the minister with an annual report, and there is to be another comprehensive review of its work at the end of the '85-86 fiscal year. We had that information at the last meeting.

When we asked for a current financial statement, my interpretation was to go to somebody who will open the books, photocopy the latest page or entries, or something like that, and show us the expenditures to date and the balance left to spend, and that sort of thing.

So I wonder whether we said what we meant in our notes here or whether we meant something different from what is recorded. I'm looking for some guidance as to my performance and actions and limits. That doesn't mean to say that we should back off.

DR. CARTER: For the sake of the record, Mr. Chairman, I'm not prepared to accept the advice of the Parliamentary Counsel on this

matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

DR. CARTER: I would like to move that the whole matter be tabled and that it come back to us at the next meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You've made a motion that the whole matter be tabled. Are you putting a time limit on it, David, or is it until further . . . Thank you. We have a motion that this topic be tabled. Is there any further discussion? Those in favour? The motion is carried.

Item 6: we have a memo from Kenneth Wark with respect to the fiscal year budget for the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. Has everybody had an opportunity to see the memo? There was a slight shift in a budget item, and he had to adjust his budget by \$2,796 in order to take in a matter pertaining to . . . What is it called, Bob?

MR. BUBBA: Long-term disability.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Long-term disability insurance benefits. All I had was LTDL, and I couldn't . . . I understand that was on instructions from Treasury. The adjustment has been made, and my suggestion is that we accept this as information. It looks to me like that is what we have here now, so we will know what happened to the budget we approved.

MR. PURDY: I'll move that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That we accept this as information. Any question or further discussion on that motion? Those in favour of the motion? It's carried.

I have one other item, which is left over from an earlier meeting. One of the items instructed the chairman to express the concerns of this committee to the people responsible with respect to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act and the voting privileges of the members of the commission. It's to do with our meeting of January 28 and was item 7 — no, that's not right. Anyway, I have the response.

My memo to the Hon. Bill Payne went like this: that our committee wanted to express our concern

over the fact that the above Act is silent

on the voting privileges of the Chief Electoral Officer, a designated member of the Commission.

We feel strongly that the Chief Electoral Officer is in a position of conflict of interest.

Do you recall that discussion? That was our position as I related it to Bill Payne.

Bill Payne says:

Further to your January 31 memorandum, regarding your Standing Committee's concerns regarding the Chief Electoral Officer's potential conflict of interest as a member of the Boundaries Commission, I have noted these concerns for my future reference at such time as the Boundaries Commission Act is opened for amending action.

He has acknowledged our letter. I did not circulate this letter to members. If anybody wishes to have a copy, we can certainly have it attached to the minutes. But this is the response we have. I'll file that with the secretary.

I have no other information at this end of the table to relate.

DR. CARTER: One question for clarification on that, Mr. Chairman. The Chief Electoral Officer did vote on the last go-around, didn't he?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, he did.

DR. CARTER: And we're opposed to that. He's an implementer of policy, not a maker of policy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, that's what he did. So we'll have that attached to the minutes of today's meeting.

Do we have any unfinished business on the things we talked about? Are there any gaps? Are there any other items we should bring forward? That transaction should be worth about \$5.

DR. CARTER: It specifically says in the Act that it can't be charged for. I wouldn't want to call the Chairman to order for trying to go contrary to legislation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And all this discussion is on

tape.

Do we have any other business at this time? Are we ready to adjourn here and reconvene at the Ombudsman's office?

MR. MILLER: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those in favour of that motion? It's carried.

[The committee adjourned at 12:38 p.m.]

