

[Chairman: Dr. Elliott]

[1:30 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll start with item 4, approval of the Ombudsman's estimates for 1986-87. Would somebody like to make a comment first?

DR. CARTER: Mr. Chairman, from the minutes of the meeting we had with the Ombudsman, I think it was simply a matter of his checking out a certain limited category of figures and shifting from general salaries to contractual arrangements. I understand that this has taken that into account, and everything seems to be in order. Is that your understanding?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's my understanding. Does anybody have any other comment on that topic?

DR. CARTER: I move that the revised budget of the Ombudsman be approved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. You've heard the motion. Any question? Those in favour of the motion? That motion is carried. Thank you.

For the second item I'd like to go to number 7, at the request of some of the members. Item 7 is the approval of the invoice from the auditing company which audited the Auditor General. I will refer this to our vice-chairman for comment.

DR. CARTER: Mr. Chairman, during the functioning of the search committee for Auditor General, a discussion took place as to the advisability of how long the same external auditing firm would have the contract to do the audit of the Auditor General. I think certain members would like to speak to that. But before that happens, I think we should still move the approval of the payment of the invoice from Sax Zimmel Stewart and Company for auditing the Auditor General. I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. We have a motion. Any question? Those in favour of the motion? That motion is carried. Thank you.

David, do you wish to carry on with item 6, discussion of the audited statement of revenue and expenditure of the office of the Auditor

General? Is that included in this discussion at this time?

DR. CARTER: Mr. Chairman, I'd encourage John Thompson to perhaps lead off on his own personal opinion on that.

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I think it has been discussed in committee before. Basically, the concept is that I think it is a responsibility of the committee to appoint the auditor for the Auditor General's office. With that, of course, is the fact that the Auditor General uses many different firms, so we would have to get a list of four or five different firms that weren't involved with the auditing system and then pick one out of them. That's the way I understand the committee's thinking on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is this the kind of topic, John, where we would ever consider consulting with the Auditor General's office to have them maybe recommend somebody other than, or should we stay independent of their suggestions?

MR. THOMPSON: I think they should submit a list of different firms and then we as the Legislative Offices Committee pick one of the firms. That's the way I look at it. There are many firms that work with the Auditor General. It would have to be a firm that is not involved in that year's audit at least, so there is no conflict of interest.

MR. HIEBERT: I support John's position. I have to leave, but I would say this. I like the idea of involving them in sorting out the options available to this committee. Then we are in the knowledge that they have the capability of doing it. I think it allows for that independence. To have the same auditor year in and year out is not a wise move.

With that I say thank you, committee members. I have to run.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

MR. MILLER: See you, Al. Have a good trip.

MR. PURDY: Could I ask a question of someone? Maybe Dr. Carter or someone else knowledgeable in this. If we go along with what

Al Hiebert has just said, that we try to float this out to various auditing firms, is that going to increase our costs of audit? If you get one audit firm that understands the operation and books of a particular company, it's a lot easier for them to go in and audit very quickly than to get to know how it's done.

DR. CARTER: I agree with your comment that if they're familiar with the system, but when we were meeting as the search committee, we also were contacted by the Alberta association of chartered accountants. Four of us met with them, and one of their concerns was that there should be a rotation so that justice might be seen to be done as well as being done. The matter was also raised with the successful applicant for Auditor General, and he agreed that it probably should be rotated — whatever the cycle is. The committee might decide that now is the time for the next one, to make the change, and that's probably the best timing, since I guess this committee will be staying together for the next few months. That will give us some room to move. But we could send a letter to put the current Auditor General and the new Auditor General on notice that we would like to see some changes made. Then we could strike a subcommittee and go over and talk to them.

We appreciate the fact that the price of the current auditors of the Auditor General has been decreasing. It's not a matter of dissatisfaction with them as a firm. That should be on the record.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I can offer some comments on this very topic. It was suggested that one of the reasons why the price went down was that they have a system in place, which means they can do this audit easier and faster than they used to. I've also had that come to me before with elected positions I've held in rural Alberta, where once you get an auditor accustomed to your system, he is able to do the work for you very well. So I'm sure we will have that come back to us from other places, and we'll have to cope with that comment.

As I understand the discussion, that issue notwithstanding, it is still suggested that we seriously consider going ahead with Mr. Thompson's recommendation. Are there any other comments on this?

MR. PURDY: I would support that as long as we don't see a 50 or 100 percent increase in costs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Bill.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, I fully support what John says and appreciate what Bill is saying. I guess the only thing I would say, Bill, is that if I were an auditor in a firm, it would be a prestige position to be able to audit the Auditor General. I would think they would take that into consideration when they put in their bid, and they would see what the auditor of the Auditor General got in the last statement. If it were very much higher, I think they would be subject to a lot of criticism, which you could give them.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Miller, I think we would also be subject to criticism for hiring him.

MR. MILLER: Except for the fact that I think we have to make sure there is a public perception out there that it's without question, and I think the Auditor General would feel better, too, if we did the selection. I like John's suggestion of their submitting a list and our picking from it without reference back to them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Very good. Thank you very much for the discussion. Are we in a position at this time to take positive action with respect to striking a committee to start on this? What would be our deadline? The present auditors are employed for the 1985-86 budget year, and they will be giving us their report sometime next summer. After the year closes, they will do the audit. Is that correct? That's the way I seem to recall it. I'll stand corrected on that, though, if that's not the way it is.

DR. CARTER: I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that we take Bud and myself to go over and start some discussions with the two auditors general. Since Bud was my vice-chairman on that other search committee, we could just sort of pick up and put everything on notice and try to find out what the alternatives are, and report back to the committee if the committee so desires.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a suggestion. Could I have some comment on that, please?

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Chairman, I'll move that we strike a subcommittee of the two previously named gentlemen and that they be instructed to carry out those discussions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. We have a motion. Any comment on the motion? Those in favour? That motion is carried. We look forward to receiving a report back from our new subcommittee. Does that look after item 7?

Does anybody have a preference as to where we go next, or can we go to the top and start our way down? Let's go to number 1, consult with the Provincial Treasurer regarding financial recognition for the Auditor General. My memo to the Treasurer, with a copy to Greg Stevens, has not been responded to by the Treasurer, but I do have a reply, a comment, from Greg Stevens which says that there is something being considered for senior personnel. He is suggesting that when this is considered this fall, it would be prorated for our Auditor General on that portion of his year from when the consideration comes in to the end of his term at the end of March. That's not what I asked in my memo. I said retroactive to January 1, 1985, because that's when his pay period starts.

I'm recommending to the committee that, Greg Stevens' comments notwithstanding, we wait for a response from the Treasurer.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, on that point. As a search committee we more or less — and I guess the new Auditor General agreed to a salary number. From my point of view I think we should stay with that number, at least for the three-month interim period, and then talk about something else. I really do feel that as far as the search committee is concerned, we talked salary and a number was given and more or less accepted. We can do some changing after that, but for January 1 to March 31, I think that should be the number that is used for the new Auditor General.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any discussion I've had has been with respect to the salary of the present Auditor General. The present Auditor General has not had his salary adjusted since 1983, if I remember correctly. The question I took to the

Treasurer was with respect to the present Auditor General for his salary year of January 1, 1985, to December 31, 1985. But thank you, John. We're going to have to face that topic, as we get into the new calendar year, as to when the new effective date will be for salary for the new Auditor General for purposes of considering adjustment. We've messed around with these starting and finishing dates for salary periods before with our three officers. I think we're trying to get them synchronized somewhat.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, I was under the impression that our Legislative Offices Committee set the salary for the present Auditor General, subject to concurrence with the Provincial Treasurer. Is this right, or am I wrong on that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't know.

MR. MILLER: Bill, do you recall? It runs in my mind that at one time we were discussing salary, and I think David discussed it with Bill. Didn't we make a recommendation?

DR. CARTER: We picked up some guidelines from the Treasurer first.

MR. PURDY: We usually wait for that OC that usually comes out in July to set the salaries of senior public servants. That's one of our guidelines that we use, as I recall.

MR. MILLER: But hasn't that been done, Bill?

MR. PURDY: I thought it was done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The information I have is that that decision has not yet been made for senior civil servants for this particular year.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Chairman, my recollection is that we don't legally have to take the Provincial Treasurer's advice but that that has been the procedure of the committee. I think this committee has the ability to speak independently in terms of those matters, but I don't think we've ever chosen to do that without consulting with the Provincial Treasurer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're correct on the action we've taken. I can't debate the point, though, of what our mandate is with respect to setting

salaries. Mr. Thompson, can you add to that?

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I've always assumed that we have the ultimate responsibility for setting up the salary of the Auditor General. We use criteria. We've more or less got a mechanism, but basically it is the responsibility of this committee to set the Auditor General's salary. I recall that a year or two ago I went over and discussed increases with the Auditor General. I don't know who appointed me; maybe I appointed myself. Anyway, I hope it's on the record that we have ultimate responsibility for setting the Auditor General's salary and having discussion with the Provincial Treasurer on it. I don't want it to get out that we are working with — I think it is our responsibility as a committee to set the Auditor General's salary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My communication with the Treasurer was asking for his comments. We weren't asking him for instruction; we were asking him for his comments and guidance in a particular area. Bill?

MR. PURDY: All I was going to say, Mr. Chairman, is that I guess we'd better wait until we get his letter or response back from him.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's been a while since I sent it and . . .

MR. PURDY: Why don't you send a second notice out now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 1 will appear back on our agenda for the next meeting, and I will have additional information because I will chase it down.

Item 2. Mr. Purdy and Mr. Thompson, would you like to report on the study to increase fees charged to irrigation districts?

MR. PURDY: Since all the irrigation districts fall in Mr. Thompson's constituency, he can have that one.

MR. THOMPSON: We did discuss it, Bill. Mr. Chairman, there was no influence on my part. I phoned, as instructed, to get in contact with the Auditor General, and he told me at that time — I think it was a coincidence — that they were looking at this problem. They felt there was a

factor there that we were maybe not aware of: that they do extra work on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund portion designated to these irrigation districts. I wouldn't call it a comprehensive audit, but they do a control audit. I have problems understanding a few of these terms, but it was a control audit. They felt it's a factor that increases the cost to these irrigation districts that hasn't been allowed before, and they wanted to come back to the committee with their feelings on it. I haven't heard anything back, but they said a week, 10 days, two weeks, something like that.

I hope we would table this item until we get more information from the Auditor General.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. We'll bring it back on the agenda next time. We're on to item 3 for discussion and approval of the approval list from the Auditor General, 1-14.

MRS. EMPSON: That's the item you were discussing, Mr. Purdy, so it will have to be tabled as well.

MR. PURDY: Yes, it's the same.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's all part and parcel of the same thing. Items 2 and 3 are the same item for next meeting.

Item 5, retroactive pay into the MLA pension plan. We have two pieces of communication. One is dated October 18, and the other is dated October 23, which was just on my desk today.

MR. PURDY: Scrap the 18th one because we . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We don't need the 18th anymore.

MR. PURDY: No. We dealt with that and got rid of it. The one dated October 23 is the most recent communication we've had with Michael Clegg. In a Members' Services Committee meeting yesterday we instructed Michael Clegg to write to the Provincial Treasurer asking that pensionable allowances be included from November 2, '82, to the present date. The reason for that, after some explanation, is that pensions are only indexed on the best of the last three years. He said you don't want to go

retroactive 15 or 9 years or anything like that. He said just go back to '82 and do it from there. So that's what our recommendation is, and we'll see what happens.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Chairman, to Bill on what he just said. For clarification, my understanding is that it's the average of the three highest years. You said the best of the last three years.

MR. PURDY: The highest of the last three years.

MR. THOMPSON: I thought it was an average of the last three years.

MR. PURDY: Average of the last three years, yes.

MR. THOMPSON: Average of the best three years.

MR. PURDY: Okay, you've confused me.

MR. MILLER: The highest salary over the three-year period where your salary was the highest.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That doesn't necessarily mean the last three. It could have been higher somewhere . . .

MR. PURDY: Yes. It's a difficult position here, because you're on a committee. Some committees, such as the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, meet quite a bit. Our committee or Members' Services may only meet X number of days, so one year you can make more than the next year.

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, last year was \$10,000 more for me than this year.

MR. MILLER: It's an important aspect, though, Dennis. One thing I should also share with the committee is that if you're in Executive Council, that's not part of your MLA pension. That's totally separate. It's important that when you're an MLA, your salary, as Dennis just pointed out, is higher than it will be when you get to be a minister. The ministerial salary is calculated separately.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A question, Mr. Miller. Are you telling me then that there isn't a pensionable portion on the minister's salary?

MR. MILLER: Yes, there is, but it's separate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I see.

MR. PURDY: It's the same as mine as Assistant Deputy Speaker of the House. That's a separate identity, too, compared to the MLA salary.

MR. MILLER: Yes, that's right, Bill.

DR. CARTER: In response to the homework, thank you for doing it.

MR. MILLER: Good, Bill.

DR. CARTER: We'll just wait to hear the response from Treasury.

MR. PURDY: We'll have to see what the Treasurer says, but our instructions as a committee were for him to go ahead and put the mechanism in place.

MR. MILLER: Wasn't there a precedent set at one time, Bill, where this was done?

MR. PURDY: With me.

MR. MILLER: I thought it was with others, though.

MR. PURDY: No, I'm the only one they could find in research, because we had to bring legislation in to cover myself as Assistant Deputy Speaker of the House or whatever it is. That legislation was adopted in 1982 or '81, and I was allowed to pay my back pension to '79.

MR. MILLER: I see.

MR. PURDY: That's where the precedent was set.

MR. ANDERSON: If I may, Mr. Chairman, they now do it with committees like the ones Bud, Dave, and I chair -- those nonlegislative committees.

DR. CARTER: So that's been in place for years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A clarification, please, Dennis. You're referring to . . .

MR. ANDERSON: That Health Facilities Review Committee that I chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So the allowance you get for that . . .

MR. ANDERSON: Is pensionable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That clarifies something with me.

DR. CARTER: He's tied with me for last place and lowest paid with those committees.

MR. THOMPSON: Is that an aside?

DR. CARTER: It's an affront.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question from the Chair is: do you want it on the record? Whether it's an aside, an affront, or from the back.

Could we move on?

MR. THOMPSON: I would like to ask one more question of Bill if I could, Mr. Chairman. We are now still waiting for an assessment from the Provincial Treasurer on the Members' Services recommendation. Is that how it works -- whether he accepts it or not?

MR. PURDY: If you read the resolution, it was: requested to administer the Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan . . . so as to permit committee allowances to be included from November 2, 1982.

If he has a legal argument, he's going to come back to us. If he hasn't, he's going to go ahead and dock it.

MR. THOMPSON: That's the point I was making. It's still up to him whether he accepts the resolution.

MR. PURDY: But I suspect he will when it comes from a committee of the House.

MR. THOMPSON: I expect so too.

MR. ANDERSON: That's a good point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My question to the

committee today is: can we remove that as an agenda item, or would you like it to remain so it will come up again?

MR. MILLER: It should be left so that we can follow up on it if need be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's fine. It's not a very large cost to us to keep it on the list from one meeting to the next, and we'll accept that as instruction.

Can we go on to item 6? Item 6 is discussion of the audited statement of revenue and expenditure for the office of the Auditor General. That was from last meeting. That was distributed to us during this past week. If you've had an opportunity to check it over or raise any questions, we could discuss it now. Would there be any need to have consultation with that auditor? You will recall that last year we discussed his report and then your chairman visited with the auditor. Dennis, would you like to walk us through this thing, or are you familiar with it at all?

MR. ANDERSON: Would I like to walk you through this thing?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The financial statement of the office of Auditor General.

MR. PURDY: It's the blue book.

MR. ANDERSON: I'd have a hard time walking you through it.

MRS. EMPSON: It was sent to your office. It's probably there, Dennis.

MR. ANDERSON: This is the one I got.

MRS. EMPSON: That one was sent to your office this week, and I only have one left for my file. You can borrow it if you want to.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, the Auditor General's report is so short and concise that I think we can tiptoe through it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Miller, would you like to introduce the topic?

MR. MILLER: I just did.

DR. CARTER: After that fulsome discussion there's a call for the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was going to ask our secretary: do you get the feeling that the chairman has lost control of this obstreperous group?

MRS. EMPSON: Not at all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right honourable vice-chairman, have you a comment you'd like to make with respect to this agenda item?

DR. CARTER: Having read through it, there's nothing very exciting that I could comment on with regard to any problems they discovered — in fact, no problems at all. It's a fairly straightforward document, and there are four notes at the back of the financial page. Everything seems to be in order, and since we've already moved the motion to pay them for their audit, I move we accept the report with thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a motion. Any question or further comment?

MR. PURDY: One question. I wonder why it takes a group of auditors -- maybe that's why we should be looking for other ones as we earlier discussed -- six months to do an audit worth \$8 million. The cost of the office, or what they're auditing, is an \$8 million figure; that's what it costs to run the Auditor's office over there. They did it ending March 31, 1985. We received the report on October 3.

DR. CARTER: Because at approximately \$3,000 a page it takes a while to get your [inaudible] to accumulate.

MR. PURDY: I'd like to have that question answered, because I think we should be able to have this report on our desks by June.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, if I may. The only reason I can think of is that they bring it forward at this time in conjunction with the approval of the next year's budget. I'm not sure whether you would blame the auditors or whether the Auditor General's office has it and doesn't bring it forward. When did they have it, Bill?

MR. PURDY: It's just the letter of October 3, 1985, that I'm reading here.

DR. CARTER: September 12.

MR. MILLER: Good question.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Chairman, my experience with auditors is that they do take some time to compile the information after having gone through the audit trail. This is a considerable amount of time. It usually takes a month or two.

MR. THOMPSON: I don't think it has caused us any real pain and suffering, but if we set a deadline for this, I think it may speed up the process.

MR. ANDERSON: Or we'll at least be told why they can't meet it.

MR. THOMPSON: Yes. I think that possibly within three months of when the audit is made, say the end of June, the report should be given to the committee, so I move that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: John, we have a motion before us now to receive this.

MR. THOMPSON: I'm talking about the future, not the present.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're talking to the motion?

MR. THOMPSON: I'm out of order again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further comment on that motion?

MR. MILLER: Some things are still working.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those in favour of Dr. Carter's motion to receive the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. That's carried unanimously.

MR. THOMPSON: Now I make the motion that we set a deadline at the end of June for the Auditor General's report to come to the

Legislative Offices Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The audit of the Auditor General?

MR. THOMPSON: The audit of the Auditor General.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a motion. Any question or comment on that motion? Those in favour of the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That motion is carried unanimously. Thank you.

DR. CARTER: The same subcommittee could probably raise that matter.

MR. THOMPSON: Yes, that's another item. Please make them aware, Bud, that we passed a motion to that effect.

MR. MILLER: I'll tell them Mr. Thompson from the deep south.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The subcommittee won't be shy about carrying that topic along with the other one when they visit with the appropriate people.

MR. MILLER: If we are, we'll call on Mr. Thompson to accompany us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
Gentlemen, are there any other items we'd like to add to the agenda today?

MR. MILLER: I have an off-the-record comment, Mr. Chairman. When I look at this name of Sax Zimmel Stewart, it seems to me that rather than a group of auditors they sound like a rock group, and the name is better than Doug and the Slugs.

MR. THOMPSON: This committee is starting to deteriorate.

MR. MILLER: I move we adjourn before we go further on that one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before I accept the motion for adjournment, I want to make sure there isn't

some other unfinished business. We should be looking at our calendar and talking about our next meeting date. We should be identifying certain items of business, other than our travel plans, that are left unfinished at this time or that we can assume are coming up. I think our travel plans are basically under control from the last meeting.

I undertook to zero in on the question of a hospitality luncheon. When I get a better idea of the other activities associated with the Legislature between now and Christmas and if we can find a time when we think everybody is going to be close to the Legislature, we will work through the Clerk's office, pick a time for a little hospitality luncheon, and invite our three officers to have lunch with the Members of the Legislative Assembly like we did before. I am carrying that one along from day to day, waiting to see what will happen.

Are there any other items like that, other than the next meeting? Dr. Carter, do you want bring up anything further?

DR. CARTER: I was just going to say that with respect to the next meeting perhaps we can look at a tentative November 7 -- it's still basically at the call of the Chair -- to see if there's any reporting back on the matter of the Auditor General's salary and also with respect to the subcommittee.

MR. ANDERSON: What is the 7th?

MR. MILLER: Thursday. I have a meeting in the morning; afternoon is okay.

MR. PURDY: The afternoon is okay with me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would try to discourage the 7th because it's not available to me.

DR. CARTER: The 5th?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: The 5th is not available to me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Twelfth? Thirteenth?

DR. CARTER: Are available.

MR. PURDY: The 13th is available for me at, say, 1:30 or so.

MR. ANDERSON: What day of the week is that?

MR. PURDY: That's a Wednesday.

MR. MILLER: I'm good on the 13th.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How does the 13th fit, David? Is it reasonable?

DR. CARTER: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Should we protect that date for a 1:30 meeting?

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Chairman, I wasn't planning to raise other topics, but you raised one with me since I didn't attend the last meeting. You mentioned the travel plans of the committee. Is that to imply that we as a group are travelling somewhere?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not as a group. There are one or two people who were assigned to accompany an officer to a meeting someplace. David has been our travel agent with respect to making sure that we get these people lined up at the right places at the right time. That's what I was referring to. There is a meeting or two between now and Christmas, and somebody will be going somewhere.

DR. CARTER: It's in the last set of minutes. I've got travel arrangements for the last batch. Bill Purdy is going to be in Ottawa, so he's going to go over to the Chief Electoral Officer thing, the conference on ethics in Chicago.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What approximate date, just for our records?

DR. CARTER: The first week of December.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

DR. CARTER: For both of those. Bud is going to go to Montreal for the comprehensive auditing conference. In theory I'm supposed to go Montreal and also to Chicago. It's the follow-up on our search committees. But I think it should be noted for the record that I'm not certain I can go to those. Perhaps it could be that if I can't go, we would send somebody

else. We could decide that at our next meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. David, would you also comment on where we left off with the group from British Columbia that came to have a visit with us about searching for an Ombudsman? There was a suggestion that was just left as a suggestion. I don't think we've heard any more from the B.C. people.

DR. CARTER: I certainly haven't heard any more from the B.C. people, but after our meeting they were suggesting — I'll back up a bit. The NDP members of the British Columbia search committee chose not to come because they thought it was a boondoggle and a waste of time. However, government members on the committee felt that their time with the past Ombudsman, the present Ombudsman, and the committee was very useful, especially with regard to the search committee's interaction. They left saying that possibly they might try to take one or two members from this committee over to B.C. to sit down with their whole committee, including the NDP members. But I don't think anything much is going to come of that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He said one or two members, Mr. Anderson.

I would strongly recommend that if we ever do receive an invitation from the B.C. people, David Carter go to discuss items with respect to the search process we've had. I strongly recommend that Mr. Gurnett accompany him to discuss that aspect of the search, and the chairman of this committee to enlighten the people of British Columbia about Legislative Offices Committees and the things they do in Alberta. So that makes three people.

DR. CARTER: I don't think there's going to be follow-up on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wonder why.

DR. CARTER: The other follow-up we did is that after the meeting I phoned the Leader of the Opposition and we had a conversation about it. So both he and Jim Gurnett knew that if they got phone calls from the NDP in B.C., they were only too willing to talk about the way the process worked here on the search committees

for all three officers. So they may be (inaudible) that way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could well be. I have no knowledge on that. Is that okay for that topic then?

Gentlemen, are there any other topics we should consider while we're here?

MR. MILLER: On that topic, I think it was extremely good public relations that you as chairman of this committee hosted them to lunch and that they were able to meet with Grant Nicol, who was with our search committee, to review some of his involvement. These things always turn out to be winners, and I think it was well done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's good.

MR. MILLER: I congratulate you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much. It's good to have that feel.

Bill, did you want to get into the discussion again?

MR. PURDY: No, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're all through? Final call for a topic?

I declare this meeting adjourned and thank you very much for your attendance and support.

[The committee adjourned at 2:10 p.m.]