

Special Select Standing Committee on Members' Services

Monday, February 1, 1982

Chairman: Mr. Amerongen

4:45 p.m.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The minutes of the December 22 meeting were circulated.

MRS. OSTERMAN: To some. I didn't get a copy.

MR. GOGO: Just one clarification, Mr. Chairman, on page whatever, in the back, item 7: B budget, government members, Mr. Appleby. Was that \$25,000 the word processor?

MR. APPLEBY: That's the government members' word processor.

MR. GOGO: That's the only question I had.

MR. PURDY: I didn't get any minutes either.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Who has no minutes?

MR. PURDY: Connie hasn't received any; neither have I.

MRS. OSTERMAN: They came out when?

SECRETARY: January 12 or 13.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Then I was away, and they're in a big stack of stuff.

MR. MANDEVILLE: While we're on the word processing, this \$25,000, there is still some confusion in our office. We transferred some money . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not yet. You applied for a transfer.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Where does that stand?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's item 3 on the agenda.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Very good.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you want to approve the minutes?

MR. GOGO: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Adopted. I don't think there is any business arising from those minutes.

MR. APPLEBY: I suppose that would combine 2 and 3 then, if Fred wants to raise an item under . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, that's right.

MR. GOGO: I read some press clippings relative to that meeting, Mr. Chairman. Were any letters coming from anybody as a result of that meeting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, there is no correspondence.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I had a question related to the budget, but I can raise it at any time because we didn't deal with the particular item that I need to ask the question about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Should I make a note of it under "other business"?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes. I want to make sure we'll get to it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we will. This is quite a manageable agenda.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I hate to interrupt, but it's probably appropriate to serve notice at the beginning of the agenda when one member wants something on the agenda.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure, or at the end; it doesn't matter.

MR. GOGO: Would the committee agree to put under "other business" long-term disability insurance?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. I have it added in handwriting. That came out after we got this put together. I have your memo here.

MR. GOGO: Would the committee agree to discuss that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: All agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have one item there as well, just a small one. Can we go back to item 3? The situation there is that the Social Credit caucus has shopped and ordered word processing equipment. As a result of the estimates we approved last time, the government caucus is going to do likewise. After that, the only members who will be left out in the cold, other than ministers . . .

MR. APPLEBY: Some ministers have it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I mean that ministers likely have their own means of getting those things. The only members who will then be left out will be Messrs. Notley, Sindlinger, and Amerongen.

We presently have, more or less on hold, some IBM equipment in the Social Credit office. Hansard is anxious to get some in-house word processing capability, and the government members are working on it. My concern is whether it would be irresponsible on my part, as the financial guy or minister

for this department, to approve these expenditures unless we take a serious look at possible standardization. I don't know whether or not that's important. I can think of one reason we should not standardize. The reason for standardization would be that we could perhaps have interchangeable equipment. A serviceman coming to service it could look at all of it on one call, assuming we would have different ones for different equipment. We might even be able to share software and save costs in that way. There are probably other pros and cons too.

On the other hand, the obsolescence is so rapid -- and different companies; once one is ahead, and then another is ahead -- that maybe there would be some value in getting different kinds of equipment, even if we had one kind in government members, another kind in your office, another kind for the three left out, and another kind in *Hansard*. Chances are *Hansard* may want something grander than the rest of us; I don't know. I was going to have Bob Bubba here today to discuss it, but he's on vacation and I didn't feel I should ask him to cancel or postpone it to be here, because we probably can go at this again. Anyhow, this would give us practical experience in several kinds of equipment. After that, there might be some thought to standardization.

Last fall, the Clerk and I initiated a study of this kind of thing. We had one fellow from the Data Centre, by the name Cherry, and Bob Bubba, who is very knowledgeable. He's been keeping his eye on this kind of thing for a long time. They have had some discussions and have prepared a report. They are now waiting for proposals from various suppliers. I asked Bob to have those for this meeting, but the last word was that they hadn't all come in. He expects that by the time he gets back from vacation, they will all be in.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I want to clarify what we're talking about here. Mr. Chairman, you started out talking about who was going to get word processors, and so on. Then Fred mentioned something about a transfer of . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was a transfer of funds to pay for word processing.

MRS. OSTERMAN: We're not now talking about the budget, are we?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No.

MRS. OSTERMAN: We're just talking about whether we should co-ordinate our activities for word processors.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Exactly.

MRS. OSTERMAN: We've already dealt with the budget.

MR. APPLEBY: But what was the transfer?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fred mentioned that in passing.

MR. APPLEBY: But is it a problem?

MR. MANDEVILLE: It's what our office had apparently done there, and we've brought it up in meetings before. They've used part of their funds, travel expenses and labor services, and transferred those funds to supplies and services. And it's never been transferred. We're not going out of our budget.

MRS. OSTERMAN: You're just changing your priorities.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Right.

MR. APPLEBY: Is there a problem with that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have the application for transfer and have held it up, because I want to see what we're going to do with this equipment. If the Social Credit caucus is going to go ahead and pick its own equipment, according to its own judgement, then the government caucus has to have the same right.

MR. APPLEBY: I think the government B budget, which we approved, was based on a three-year lease program. Taking into account your comments, Mr. Chairman, about possible exposure to different types of equipment, we're not locked in after that three-year term. If some other department or branch in the building gets something else and we find it better, at the end of three years we could switch over.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I misapprehended that situation. I thought you were buying.

MRS. PRATT: We didn't want to buy because of the obsolescence.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would have to respect that.

MR. GOGO: Further to that, Mr. Chairman, Social Credit wants to rearrange their operating budget, which has theoretically already been approved. That's one thing. As I recall, the government members' B budget item in no way implies that it's ever going to be approved. I think that's a fundamental difference between the two.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How do you mean, it doesn't imply it's going to be approved? Do you think the priorities committee is going to cut it back?

MR. GOGO: I think the word is out that new programs, which B budgets are, are not necessarily looked upon with favor. So I would think the chances of it being approved, with what I hear the Provincial Treasurer saying, leaves me up in the air. Otherwise we could get it through with an expanded A item.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That raises a serious question, which we've gone through before; that is, whether a committee of cabinet has the right to overrule a committee of the House. We have adopted estimates as a committee of the House. I would question what sort of breach it would be if a committee of cabinet purports to amend the report of a committee of the House. In effect, that is what our estimates are. We are saying to the House that we've studied what we need, here it is, and we submit it to you for your approval. In a sound parliamentary sense, how can we have a committee of cabinet come along and say: look, you guys, we're not going to let you report to the House in this fashion, or to submit these things to the House; we're going to change this, and we're the government.

MR. GOGO: Maybe I'm out of line, but with respect, Mr. Chairman, I understood that B budgets were those new programs that people were desirous of and wanted to apply to the funding agency to get funds for.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think I would understand the process like the Chairman does. That is that the B budget item is treated no differently from the rest of the budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's what I understand.

MRS. OSTERMAN: It goes intact, and it will not be changed once it's approved by this committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Except in the House.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Except in the House. So I don't think we have a worry there. I think B budget items are the same. I think the conversations John has heard relate to other departments. But I just wanted to clarify that we weren't starting to get back into adding something new here in terms of -- everybody has their own priorities in terms of what they believe to be necessary and proper for approval. We've been through that process, so I hope we wouldn't start talking about word processing for other members.

MR. GOGO: You mean open the budget again.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, that's not the question at all. Fred, you want to say something.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Not really. As I understand it, our office went to the purchasing department, not realizing they had to get approval to transfer these funds.

MRS. PRATT: You're talking about your current budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This isn't a budget discussion at all.

MR. PURDY: It's a transfer of funds.

MR. MANDEVILLE: Instead of spending the money on travelling expenses and professional, technical, and labor services, they want to transfer that money to the vote for supplies.

MR. APPLEBY: There shouldn't be any difficulty in that at all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: From what you've said, Frank, that raises another point. Let's look at the guts of this thing. The Socred caucus evidently has surplus funds under a certain category, that were approved in the budget. Those are public funds. If we spend them for something, we're still spending public funds. The question in my mind is not only the choice of the equipment. In view of what you've said, Frank, we should also be considering whether we should be going into purchasing under the aegis of the Legislative Assembly or whether we should be leasing. Have you considered leasing?

MR. MANDEVILLE: Really, I don't think . . . It's just another piece of equipment for the office.

MR. APPLEBY: I can't really agree with you, Mr. Chairman. I think this is an internal matter for whatever caucus is involved. If they want to shift their funds around in some manner in order to do that, and they make that application, I don't see it is up to us to say, well, you should lease rather than buy, or whatever.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then it wouldn't take an approval. You could just go ahead and spend the money in the caucuses.

MR. APPLEBY: No, it takes an approval from somebody.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It takes my approval.

MR. APPLEBY: Yes, it takes your approval.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And I have withheld it because I want to do it responsibly.

MRS. OSTERMAN: This really raises something that is rather close to me right now, because I've just got lambasted in a letter to the editor written by somebody out of your office who talked about . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Out of my office?

MRS. OSTERMAN: No, somebody out of the opposition's office, who implied, in a public letter to the editor, that I had somehow pocketed \$20,000 because I hadn't had an office opened in Airdrie. I was absolutely flabbergasted when I read this. Anybody who is responsible knows that if you haven't expended the funds, they're not in your pocket; they're in general revenues.

Now, because of what I understand to be guidelines -- and quite properly so -- because I didn't have an office opened, I certainly couldn't turn around and say, all right, I've decided that's not my priority; I want to use the funds somewhere else. Right? It's not allowed to do so. In the budget, the designation is that it shall be thus and so.

MR. MANDEVILLE: By legislation too, Connie, don't forget.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes. If we start looking at how we approve the budget, then we shouldn't even be talking about individual items. We should just take a global amount and approve it, and everybody spends it how they will. Now we're talking about a complete rearrangement of something. That means we all could do that, and our discussion isn't all that meaningful. If you've got an unexpended amount within government departments, my understanding is -- because I have asked. I said, why can't you embellish this program here because this one hasn't got all the funds completely expended, and they said there is no way you can do that; because it's under a certain vote, it can't be changed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Certain things that are considered compatible are transferable.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Is this considered compatible?

MR. CHAIRMAN: As far as I know, from a financial control point of view those funds are transferable.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Then I'm not concerned.

MR. GOGO: The responsibility surely lies with the department head to determine whether or not they should be transferred. The Chairman is on an excellent point. He is saying that if three offices all want to order stationery, and it results somehow in the transfer of money in a vote, then he must approve it. Doesn't it make sense, then, that he says you can buy three times the stationery, the sum total of the stationery from one supplier and get it cheaper. That's the proper use of public funds. I think that's what the Chairman is saying. Now he's saying that if this caucus is going to get this equipment and he has to sign a transfer to get it, doesn't it have a bearing on what other caucuses are doing in terms of equipment?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's it exactly.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I was speaking to Fred's point in that he was talking about a problem of transfer of moneys.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's the same point.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, no. You held it up pending a decision on how equipment is going to be handled.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. I know if I approve this, we're taking funds which were earmarked for one purpose and spending them for a purpose which, within the financial parameters, is considered related. If we're going to do this, and it is still public funds, I have two questions: should the funds be spent for leasing, or should they be spent for buying equipment? The equipment that is bought with that money is going to belong to the Legislative Assembly. There's no doubt about it. Then if somebody -- in the *Journal* or elsewhere -- comes along and says to me, look what you're doing in your department; there is no firm in the world that uses three kinds of computer equipment in the same firm; what are you doing approving those transfers of money?

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, I think you should go to the Law Clerk and get a legal interpretation of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not in any great doubt about it.

MR. PURDY: You're not?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. The information I have from our chief administrative officer is that this is an allowable transfer, but it is still discretionary. If it happens within a department, a minister has to sign. Under the Financial Administration Act, I'm the minister in relation to the Legislative Assembly. It seems to me that both the minister and I have to act responsibly.

MRS. OSTERMAN: The question the Chairman is really asking us is: is that the best expenditure of funds? Ultimately you're still responsible for that expenditure. In all these offices, when we purchase equipment -- when the opposition purchases a typewriter or whatever -- how is that done?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It goes through the Clerk's office. We did a similar thing with the members' constituency offices. We were able to get a pretty good deal on telephone answering equipment, so we bought a bunch of it, all the same kind, for all members' offices. That was a responsible exercise of the Clerk's function in the expenditure of public funds for that purpose.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Then I would make only one comment, Mr. Chairman. We've talked a long time in government members' offices about word processing equipment, and it seems to be a very personalized thing. Until we have used some for a while -- and certainly that was the conclusion we came to in terms of leasing and not buying -- we would like to handle that operation ourselves in terms of the choice, and then have a look at it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm concerned about what you choose. If you and the Social Credit opposition, and let's assume possibly the other three members get equipment they share, or *Hansard*, and we all go to the same supplier, chances are we'll get a better deal. I don't know whether it would be held up on the servicing or not. We may even be able to use the same software. Whereas you might go to Apple, you go to IBM, and I go to Bell and Howell, Radio Shack, Computer World, or somebody like that -- you know, there are dozens of them. Then we have three different pieces of equipment.

MR. MANDELBAUM: I would just like to say that it would seem to me that the needs of the different caucuses are different. From the little I know about word processors, they do have specific features that make them more amenable to one group than they might another.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. I'm just looking for advice.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That's the information we have, Mr. Chairman. That's why the leasing arrangement seemed to be more appropriate. Based on what we perceived our needs to be, we would then choose the one that most closely suited us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you have in mind to have one word processor for -- how many members are there on the two sides?

MR. APPLEBY: Forty-three.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you going to have one processor to serve 43?

MR. APPLEBY: That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So the chances are that you're going to want a much larger capacity than what the Socreds want.

MRS. PRATT: Possibly. We'll have to try it and see how much it is used.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chances are, too, that in the capacity you need, a certain supplier may have a better configuration than a supplier whose configuration may be better in a smaller capacity. Right?

MR. APPLEBY: Originally, Mr. Chairman, we were going to go to a one-year basis on the lease, but there was such a little difference -- was it \$6,000? -- for three years compared to one, that we thought we might as well go for the

three-year base and get more members exposed to it. Within one year, a lot probably wouldn't get to understand what it was all about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think what I'll do is that as soon as Bob Bubba gets back, I'll put my head together with him and Cherry -- I've forgotten his first name. Fred, maybe you could look into your office and see what kind of shopping they did, whether they considered leasing instead of buying because of the obsolescence.

MR. MANDEVILLE: I just can't get to the bottom of this. We're talking about last year's budget. I know a principle is involved, whether it's a typewriter, word processing, or whatever. We're using part of our funds that we didn't use. Instead of buying more travelling, we're using part of our funds to put it into word processing.

MR. APPLEBY: And that is permissible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. Nothing wrong with it; there's no objection.

MR. GOGO: But he's running out of time.

MRS. OSTERMAN: What we're talking about is next year's expenditures.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, that's right. But their equipment is going to be here while yours is here; it's going to overlap. In fact, theirs will be here until it becomes obsolete and the government junks it, because we're buying it instead of leasing it.

MR. APPLEBY: Mr. Chairman, were they going to do a study for all the Legislature?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, they did it for *Hansard* mainly.

MR. MANDEVILLE: I'd like this to come to a head. I'm not going to come up to Edmonton to meetings to go through this three or four -- I thought it was all straightened away. I'm going to make a motion that these funds be transferred, subject to your approval.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's already been done. You've applied for the transfer, and it's awaiting my approval.

MR. MANDEVILLE: It's been sitting there for . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's the reason for it, Fred.

MR. GOGO: I don't know that it's business for this committee.

MRS. OSTERMAN: This committee does not have to approve that transfer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, but I've come here for advice, because I'm concerned. I know nothing about computers, and I'm concerned about standardizing.

MR. APPLEBY: If Fred wants to make a motion, Mr. Chairman, do you feel this is superfluous?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't know whether or not you need a motion.

MR. GOGO: With respect, there's a wrong precedent. I think this is between the department head and members of the department. Mr. Mandeville must convince his department head -- in this case, the Speaker -- to proceed.

MR. APPLEBY: I think Fred has some concern about the urgency of getting this thing approved.

MR. GOGO: Well, I think that's between the two of them.

MR. MANDEVILLE: I thought it was all taken care of.

MR. APPLEBY: As far as we're concerned, it isn't a matter we should be discussing.

MR. MANDEVILLE: I thought it was all taken care of.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fred, if the same farmer gets John Deere, Cockshut, McCormack, and whatever else, and you say to yourself, why didn't you get it all from the same manufacturer?

MR. MANDEVILLE: You don't run farms like you run governments.

MR. MANDELBAUM: Could I just make another comment in regard to the advantages of leasing as opposed to buying. As a matter of fact, one of our people is a computer expert; works in that area. Just to say there are arguments on both sides, he recommended very strongly buying as opposed to leasing. I think it also depends on personal viewpoint. I don't think there is any definitive argument one way or the other.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Now, the next item is quite simple. Speaker Turner from the Ontario Legislature . . .

MR. APPLEBY: We missed 4.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry. That was my item. I crossed it off and didn't tell you about it. I saw some expense claims coming in at 13 cents, and I saw that the rates were higher for some people. I wasn't aware that they had generally been raised. I was going to ask the committee to find out why members were getting lower mileage rates than staff people. I find that that is not the case.

MR. PURDY: What is the rate now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it's 18 cents.

MR. APPLEBY: Okay. We can cross that off, then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. GOGO: So your staff will look after that, if somebody puts in a claim.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Incidentally we have the claim forms here. Have you got copies of the guidelines for claiming mileage as of last November? No? I wonder if we could get some photocopies made. Let's give them to everybody. The next is credit cards.

MR. PURDY: You're on No. 5 now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry, I'm just getting ahead of myself. Speaker John Turner, of the Ontario Legislature, and a man called Fleming, who is their chief administrative officer, are coming here and are going to have some discussions with some of our administrative personnel. They're going to be spending a little time with me on the 25th. The reason I put this on the agenda was simply to ask whether any members here would like to talk to them and find out what they do in Ontario about members' offices, services, and stuff like that. So if any of you are free, I propose -- it says 10 o'clock here.

MR. APPLEBY: Is that in your office, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. If anybody is interested, please feel welcome to come. I'm sure they would be glad to have some discussion.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Thursday, February 25?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. They are also going to be spending time with the Clerk.

MR. APPLEBY: It would be a parliamentary delegation?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I think there are only three people.

MR. APPLEBY: Members?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. The chief administrator and somebody else from his staff. They're staff people. As I understand it, this is a delegation of three. There won't be any Ontario MPPs among them. You might find it interesting to compare notes. As I said, if you'd like to come I'd suggest a little before 10, because they have another meeting around 10:30.

The message about George Wolstenholme is that he is recovering from five days in the hospital. He says he feels fine, but the doctor has restricted him to long periods of rest, short walks to the corner block, accompanied by his wife. He's going to go into the General hospital for two weeks of rehabilitation tests. He says thank you for calling, and he's in favor of whatever you decide.

MRS. OSTERMAN: We need more like him.

MR. APPLEBY: Would the General hospital be here?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It doesn't say. Calgary would certainly be closer.

MR. PURDY: Any date when he's going in?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, just that he's going there for two weeks, but it doesn't say when.

On the credit cards, this is the problem we're running into. I'm on this list too, but it ain't so. Some members have PetroCan credit cards, and PetroCan has advised that it is no longer going to provide copies of charge slips with the monthly invoices. That means we'll get the invoices, but there will be no charge slips with them. Treasury won't accept them without the charge slips.

MR. PURDY: When are they going to start doing that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't know how soon.

MR. GOGO: How many members?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Eight.

MR. GOGO: Can you ask that they be withdrawn immediately?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The only thing is, though, that the indications are that other credit card companies are going to be doing the same thing. The question is what are we going to do about it?

MRS. PRATT: Can't you keep your slip when you sign for it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: One way out of it, and this is one reason I wanted to discuss it here, is that we have no choice really. It's a Legislative Assembly credit card. We have no choice but to pay them when they come in; we can't argue about them. What we would have to do -- and hopefully this would be accepted by Treasury; I'm not sure yet -- is pay them, and in cases where the members don't give us the vouchers, collect back from the members. It may be a nuisance for you.

MR. GOGO: It's back to the parking argument. Do we know whether gasoline companies are going to do this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: This appears to be the trend with credit card companies. This is a memo from Charlene Blaney to the Clerk.

MR. PURDY: Don't they itemize it at all?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The items are there, but it won't say what they're for.

MRS. OSTERMAN: The purchase will be in, but you won't know what the purchase is. It could have been a tire, and that's not allowed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And Treasury won't accept them.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I don't blame them at all. I think if the onus goes back on us, there's absolutely nothing we can do about it. In the meantime, until we're faced with it, I think those cards should be removed unless members know they're going to have to supply the -- they'll have to have a memo.

MR. PURDY: They won't remove mine, because that's the only gas station I can buy from the majority of the time. It's the only one I have.

MRS. OSTERMAN: So you'll just have to keep your slip. I always have mine stuffed into my purse, and I could just as easily stuff them in an envelope in a drawer and turn them in every month.

MR. GOGO: I have no hang-up about people retaining their slips.

MRS. OSTERMAN: We have no choice.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm reluctant to just tell all these members that they have to cancel their PetroCan credit cards.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Tell them what the new rules are.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I suppose for the time being, we can limit it to PetroCan.

MR. APPLEBY: This will be going through the whole government system, won't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: They're having a few problems with this blanket credit card business.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes, I noted that from the memo.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I sent you copies of these, didn't I?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes, I have the one about the universal credit card.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, this is a minor part of the same problem.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, it occurs to me that that's important enough that maybe a call should be placed to the members' secretaries, if people are out right now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was going to send them memos as well.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes, but along with the memo, so that is brought to their attention immediately.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. What is your wish, then? That we tell the members who have PetroCan cards that henceforth they should keep the vouchers, because otherwise Treasury won't accept the charges? And for any unvouchered items, we'll have to recover from the members.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes, you'll have no choice.

MR. GOGO: You say seven or eight members, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: They have nine listed here. They included me, but I haven't got a PetroCan card. I still have my Pacific 66 one; they've never changed it.

MR. GOGO: They won't honor it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know they won't.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I think your office should advise those members' secretaries tomorrow morning to that effect, by phone, followed by a memo. I also think a memo to all members of the Assembly might be in order about the trend.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. GOGO: And give consideration -- I don't know the wording -- to retaining the initial . . . I think you could have that in a memo.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It would also have to apply to members who are intending to get PetroCan credit cards.

MR. GOGO: The memo could go to everybody, but a phone call to the members concerned. A general memo indicating that PetroCan no longer -- and the general trend so that members aren't shocked when it happens.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we'll do that. Is there anything else on the question of credit cards? Incidentally, I have a status report, from Charlene Blaney to the Clerk, on MLA parking, which we attempted to arrange through credit cards. I think you all got copies of that. Are there any comments about that? You see the alternative there, at the bottom. It brings us back to that same old business. I don't think Peter Trynchy or Graham Harle still have this -- you're another one.

MR. PURDY: The court case.

MR. CHAIRMAN: When is it going to be heard?

MR. PURDY: I don't know. You know what lawyers are like, don't you?

MR. CHAIRMAN: But seven years? I don't know any lawyers who sit on things for seven years.

MR. GOGO: Not unless it's an insurance claim, I agree.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Two years, okay; but seven years?

MR. APPLEBY: That's an appeal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Can't you build a fire under somebody?

MR. APPLEBY: Leave it the way it is.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Anyway, Mr. Chairman, we take this as information, and just let it drop for now.

MR. GOGO: The part that bothers me about it . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Guys like George Wolstenholme are getting stuck. Do you want us to initiate a practice whereby this kind of thing is included in the travel expense form, and we start paying it?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, what bothers me is this: ministers of the Crown, at any time they incur an expense, whether it's 50 cents or \$25 for parking, are reimbursed. When the House is sitting, ministers of the Crown receive the same as other members of the House when they're absent from their residence. So I don't like the argument that when the House is sitting -- and we're faced with this next month -- there is no way members can be compensated for parking claims, unlike ministers of the Crown. I see it every day: ministers collecting 50 cent receipts for parking when the House is sitting. Other members can't do that at the present. So I don't like the suggestion that we put it off again. We're now faced with Edmonton parking at \$6 per day, Calgary at \$5 per day. It's becoming a very expensive item.

I think we have to resolve it one way or the other. If to resolve it by way of putting in an expense claim contravenes -- isn't that what you said before?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, it doesn't contravene. It's whether it's taxable. There were some members who paid a fairly large amount in back income tax. This is what happened around about 1973 or 1974. The income tax office said, you people are getting a tax-free allowance; it's 50 per cent -- it isn't now, I know -- of your sessional indemnity, which is what it was before we changed over to a salary: that's supposed to cover these individual items; if as an MLA you recover expenses over and above that, we're going to tax them. And they taxed living allowances, and some members paid as much as \$2,000 in back income taxes.

MR. PURDY: I paid \$2,800, when I was getting \$15 a day for living in Edmonton. That's what the rate was, wasn't it?

MR. APPLEBY: \$40.

MR. PURDY: No, no.

MR. GOGO: When I got elected, it was \$30. It was less than that when Bill went.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can just say, okay, include it in your expenses and we'll pay it and hope for the best.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I know that John is anxious to deal with it, but I'd like to be able to discuss this with a few more of my colleagues. What it does is give this thing another profile, and I'm concerned about that. I'd like that opportunity to talk to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: How do you mean, it gives it a profile?

MRS. OSTERMAN: In terms of adding it to one more benefit. It sort of piles up the list in terms of claims that you get reimbursed for instead of things that are just automatically paid out of the Legislative Assembly office. I would like the opportunity to have that discussion between now and the next meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Put it over to the next meeting?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. GOGO: Okay, I'll address that when we get to discussion of the committee then, because I'd like us to do something prior to the House sitting.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

MR. GOGO: And me at the meeting, and I won't be here until the 1st.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Now, the national youth parliament association. Did we send you some material on that? I went over that, and the Clerk and I have discussed it a couple of times. Just to give you a little background: the first time they applied for money, the request went to the Provincial Secretary. Then somehow or other, it went to the Attorney General, because he was also acting as Provincial Secretary. They decided that since it was a parliamentary thing, it would be better if the money came from the Legislative Assembly instead of from the government. So they got in touch with the Clerk's office and said, if you will pay that money, we'll reimburse you with a special warrant. The Clerk and I thought, well, I guess we're just being a pipeline; they want to pay the money and we might as well go along with it. So we paid them the \$4,800, they gave us a special warrant to cover it, and that was that. That was the first contribution that was made last spring.

Now they're back for more money. I think they want \$5,800 instead of \$4,800. On going over the material, we're just wondering -- there are no Albertans on their board of governors. In two places, they talk about 12 members of this parliament from Alberta, but they have only 10 on that list. We had some sort of inquiry. The Clerk of the New Brunswick Legislature wrote to our Clerk and wondered what we should do about it. If you agree, we were going to propose bringing it up when the Canadian Speakers meet in Ottawa -- that will be some time between now and the middle of June, no doubt -- discuss it, see what the various provinces are going to do, and then bring it back to you.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Okay. Mr. Chairman, that sounds like a co-ordinated approach. You could have any number of groups start to form and do things. If we're going to get into that position, we could be funding forever.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Their budget for their first year -- and maybe their activities weren't as good as they might be -- was \$42,000. I haven't got their middle year, but for this current year they want to go up to \$103,000. What it gives is 12 young parliamentarians from Alberta -- I guess a lot of them will be from Tuxis and Older Boys Parliament; I know some are. I'm not sure about the Alberta All Girls' Parliament, whether they have a sniff on this or not. In any case, it's a week in August when they carry on this parliament.

MR. APPLEBY: That's in the national capital?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, they're going to use the Senate Chamber.

MRS. OSTERMAN: The next thing, Mr. Chairman, we would have to fund the girls' association.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, they should be including girls.

MRS. PRATT: There is one girl among the Alberta members.

MR. APPLEBY: Mr. Chairman, you were referring to the fact that the make-up of the parliament . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right, the 12 members. Because we have an Alberta All Girls' Parliament -- I don't know how they select these people.

MRS. OSTERMAN: We have to have far more information.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you agree, we'll put it over. We've already written the New Brunswick Clerk to put it on the agenda for this discussion in Ottawa.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Under "other business", Connie wants to raise a budget item, and John the long-term disability insurance plan.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I had some confusion. I had raised with me the question about the promotional items. I didn't know whether the item I had in my budget book was the proper one. I'd like to have an updated sheet on the general administration, Code 600 I think. The amount that somebody suggested that we had actually asked for was far more than what is shown here. When I looked into the explanation sheets, I couldn't find what we had eventually decided. I know we added a major promotional item. Not having my past minutes, apparently in October we said we would deal with that promotional item when we dealt with the budget. I don't know what has happened since then. You have all the minutes there. I wonder where we made a final decision on how much it should be. I don't think I have the updated sheet in my book.

MR. PURDY: It was a motion by me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: October 7?

MRS. PRATT: October 7, the committee agreed this item would be dealt with under estimates.

MR. PURDY: It would be a motion I made at a later meeting.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes, under estimates.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Promotional items: this is in the meeting of October 7. The committee agreed that this item be dealt with under estimates.

MR. APPLEBY: Was the amount mentioned, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not in this set of minutes.

MR. PURDY: It would be later.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is your question?

MRS. OSTERMAN: How much we ended up with and who made the motion on promotional items in the budget. I don't have the final figure here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You mean we amended it?

MR. GOGO: You have the final figure as approved. You're wondering how it came about.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I don't think this is the approved figure.

MR. GOGO: Connie, the explanation sheet, on page 9a.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On the October 19 meeting, we have a motion by Bill about lapel pins. But that would be a small part of it. That's not promotional items anyway; that's for members.

MRS. OSTERMAN: You see, all these things mentioned in Code 600 couldn't possibly cover, could they? You have a big stationery amount in here.

MR. PURDY: You'll have to find one strictly in budget. I distinctly remember reading it, but I can't put my hands on the particular set of minutes right now.

MRS. PRATT: On the summary sheet of motions approved and deferred, there's serial 891, \$150,000 added to general administration, Code 600. That was approved, but when?

SECRETARY: I went through the minutes and documented that based on the minutes. I can't tell you offhand which one it was.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does the transcript get that involved?

SECRETARY: It would be harder to find than in here.

MR. GOGO: Maybe someone could take a minute and deal with that, Connie. We could go on to the next item and come back to it.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: When did we start discussing estimates?

MRS. PRATT: It was deferred on October 7.

MRS. OSTERMAN: It was between October 7 and this date here.

SECRETARY: On October 7, Mr. Purdy made a motion, under estimates, that \$150,000 be added.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Minute 81-226.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I thought there had been an amount deducted. I think John's recollection was the same. When the Clerk said some of that is already covered . . .

MR. GOGO: I think that's what the 127 is now, Code 600.

MRS. OSTERMAN: No, 127 is stationery, for instance. So the \$150,000 is the flat amount that was added to. So that's 79 members into \$150,000. I guess it doesn't jibe with figures I thought we allocated that we thought were necessary per member.

MR. GOGO: Bill, you had a work sheet.

MR. PURDY: Yes.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Fred, can you recall?

MR. MANDEVILLE: Was it \$1,800 a member, or something like that?

MRS. OSTERMAN: That's probably what it would work out to. We had a detailed working sheet as to how you came up with that, Bill.

MR. PURDY: We included Alberta flags, poles for the flags, coat of arms, spoons, letter openers, pen sets, promotional pictures, belt buckle, books, and plaques. Then we had another B item which was pins, the Canadian flag pin, at \$61 a member, the Alberta flag at \$71 per member, the Alberta signature \$162, the plastic one \$480, and crests and stuff for school children.

MR. GOGO: I remember the Clerk speaking to it and saying he had already budgeted a certain amount for pins.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I guess the pins were \$8,000.

MR. GOGO: What is the question?

MRS. OSTERMAN: The question was that I was asked about that total amount.

MR. APPLEBY: More than expected?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes, more. And I didn't have the final amount in here, because we had altered it and I couldn't remember the final amount. I didn't have the revised budget in my book, so I couldn't see how we had come up with these figures.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there now a suspicion that we voted too much money for it?

MRS. OSTERMAN: In terms of the discussion and the things the committee had talked about originally. Frankly, I couldn't recall and that's why I raised it.

MR. PURDY: What we have to determine now is what the final amount was that was sent to printing on Vote 600: was it \$150,000 or \$240,000?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, let's find out, and we'll circulate a memo to all members of the Members' Services Committee.

MR. GOGO: Refer that to the Clerk of the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can get it without waiting for him to come back. He's in Quebec with the CPA delegation, using his French. He's perfectly fluent.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Thank you.

MR. GOGO: Under new business, Mr. Chairman, as I understand it we now have a situation where if a member of the Assembly were to become incapacitated -- this a question; I don't know the answer -- for whatever reason, he would receive his indemnity until such time as there is a writ for an election. I understand that is the system. In other words, if a medical certificate says he is incapacitated, he is still a sitting member until his seat is declared open, which would be the writ of the next election. Whereas certain senior management and ministers of the Crown have a long-term disability insurance program that provides them with benefits. Is that accurate?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't know.

MR. GOGO: My information is that it is, because I'm quoting Charlene Blaney. In other words, there is no coverage for members of the Assembly.

A couple of members have raised this with me. For example, if they were to be killed on Highway 16 west, there is life insurance that would look after that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: \$100,000.

MR. GOGO: On the other hand, if they weren't fortunate and died . . .

MRS. OSTERMAN: You mean their spouse wasn't fortunate.

MR. GOGO: If they survive and are incapacitated, bedridden, there is no question they would continue to receive their indemnity until the writ of election, at which time the seat is of course vacant until the returns from the returning officer are in. From there on of course there's nothing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Unless they run again.

MR. GOGO: I speak now for, say, Mr. Pahl -- certain people who had various benefits they subscribed to that were really forfeited upon election because they are no longer members of a company, and so on. I raise it in that context, that this committee consider long-term disability insurance for members of the Assembly. As I pointed out, we now have it for certain members of the Assembly by virtue of their jobs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: When you say "long-term", you mean to age 65?

MR. GOGO: Whatever the master plan is. In fairness, I've also asked Mr. Stevens, Minister responsible for Personnel Administration, to provide some response and would he attend a meeting of this committee to explain. But if I could, I'd like to get agreement in principle from the committee that it's an area we should pursue and, if they'd rather, we should give serious consideration to.

MR. APPLEBY: Agreed.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes, I'd like to see even a briefing document that describes what senior management . . .

MR. APPLEBY: And Executive Council.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Suppose that we find out what disability insurance is provided for senior management and members of Executive Council, and send a memo to all members of this committee.

MR. PURDY: Don't all people under the public service contribute to long-term disability anyway?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't know.

MR. APPLEBY: Those things could be investigated, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll find out what disability insurance is provided to employees in the public service.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Or access to, because it may be a voluntary thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. What kind of insurance is provided or to which they have access -- members of the public service and of Executive Council.

MR. GOGO: This raises a second point: what budget implications there are for '82-83 and how we could handle it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And what it would cost to provide that kind of coverage, and include the cost in the 1982-83 budget. That's the second question.

MR. GOGO: I don't recall what implications there were with the dental program when it was brought in. Maybe Mr. Stevens could provide those answers. That was done midyear.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that all right for that?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any other "other business"?

MR. APPLEBY: Just one thing, Mr. Chairman. Maybe I got the wrong impression, but I thought we had a discussion at the end of a meeting some time ago regarding whether we were going to maintain the transcript of these meetings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. We decided we didn't need to. But the expense is minimal; the cost isn't there, or the equipment is there anyway. I thought it might be prudent to continue for a bit, especially since we were starting to have visits from the press. Then there were things coming out of these meetings that were a little distorted. I just felt that as a safeguard, it might be well to have a proper, verbatim record. But if in spite of what has occurred you feel we should skip it, then we can.

MR. APPLEBY: No, I didn't have a particular concern about it. I just wondered what was happening. That's a good explanation for it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's the reason. Like Horatio Nelson, I just turned a blind eye.

I have one item of "other business". We have been typing up our records, our control, of equipment provided to members. We've been working with the Auditor General on it and have developed a form for members to sign, acknowledging that they received certain items of equipment. We also have -- and I think I reported this at an earlier meeting -- an equipment register, a permanent bound book in which all this is. The thing is that because this wasn't being done in the past, insofar as I'm aware -- unless it was in the distant past -- we have to sort of start and have a basis for it. So we have been asking members to sign forms showing what equipment they now have. Frankly, we've run into some resentment: why the hell do I have to sign this?

MR. PURDY: I sent mine today. I have no resentment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't know why we should have.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I haven't seen mine; it must be in my pile of stuff.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You didn't tell us where to go. I'm not sure how many members; I don't think it's more than two, and it might be one. The Clerk came in some distress and said, you know, what are we going to do if they refuse to sign these forms and we have somebody say, why the hell should I sign that? I just thought I'd mention it here. I don't know whether a resolution of this committee would reinforce the thing.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think it could be just raised in various places.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't think it was anybody in the opposition, Fred.

MR. GOGO: How did the memo read?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's not a memo; it's just an acknowledgment form, a receipt form that you sign for equipment.

MR. PURDY: That you have this piece of equipment, with this serial number on it; do you have it in your possession; please sign the form and send it in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I just wondered whether we were on the wrong tack, that members here might know that we were doing wrong about it.

MR. PURDY: Well, maybe when you ask for a witness to the signature, that might tick somebody off. I don't know.

MRS. PRATT: That's true. That's what it asks for.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If members have illegible signatures.

MR. GOGO: That's why you put "please print".

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any other "other business"?

MR. APPLEBY: I'm amazed at how anybody would resent that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is the reason I raised it. The Clerk is in some distress about this.

MR. GOGO: It's like the fellow who got his pay envelope, and it was a dollar short. He stormed up to the paymaster and said, hey, my pay envelope is a dollar short. Just a minute, sir, I'll check the record. Oh yes, that's true. But last week we overpaid you ten dollars. Well, he said, I'll tolerate one mistake but not two.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is a final item of business, and that is the next meeting. Do you want to consider what we would do at the next meeting, so we can assess the urgency?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Look at the long-term disability.

MR. GOGO: Connie had a question she wanted resolved by then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On promotional materials?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes.

MR. GOGO: On dates, Mr. Chairman, Monday, March 1, or March 2 after 3 o'clock.

MR. PURDY: I'm okay after March 1, it looks like. On March 2, I'd rather have it later because I told [inaudible] I'd go into a school for a while on the 2nd.

MR. APPLEBY: When you say later, what time?

MR. PURDY: 3:30, 4 o'clock.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Tuesday is a cabinet day.

MR. GOGO: I'd be happy with 4:30, 5:30. I'm tied up with a board commission meeting on the 2nd until 3 o'clock or so. From then on, I'm fine. Or the first Monday.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Monday is out for me.

MR. APPLEBY: How about 4 o'clock on Tuesday, Connie?

MR. CHAIRMAN: How about you, Fred?

MR. MANDEVILLE: 4 o'clock on Tuesday sounds reasonable.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I'd have to leave cabinet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 4 o'clock Tuesday, March 2. The agenda items you want included that you can remember right now: long-term disability; promotional material, Code 600.

MR. GOGO: Connie, do you want airport parking back on?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Oh yes. The only thing that bothers me about that late date is any change we might want to add. But John, you're not available earlier.

MR. GOGO: No.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I'm concerned about changes to our budget.

MR. GOGO: It would be your recommendation, and we'd deal with it then.

MRS. OSTERMAN: If the budget is printed by then . . .

MR. GOGO: We'll deal with it like we did with the dental program, however it goes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's agreed that it's Tuesday, March 2, 4 o'clock. We have those three items noted on the agenda. If anything else comes to mind, you could let me know. We have a motion by Mr. Mandeville for adjournment.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.