

[Chairman: Mr. Amerongen]

[1:04 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a quorum, and perhaps we could start off by introducing our guests. Over at the back we have Don Wanagas from the Edmonton Sun. Then we have Miss Cathryn Landreth and Lawrence Swabey and, I think, Mr. Kruger and Brian Woolfenden, the architect. That's everybody who is a guest. If you want to go around the table to the members, at the end is Jim Gurnett; next to him, Ken Kowalski; next to him, having the tete-a-tete, is Nigel Pengelly; then Shirley Cripps; and Margaret Pratt, who is in charge of the government caucus offices. This is Charles Eliuk, otherwise known as Chuck, who is the chief of administration for the Legislative Assembly Office, and Miss Ann Conroy, who is in the Clerk's office and faithfully takes down our relevances and also our non sequiturs. Over here we have Bohdan Stefaniuk, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; then Robert Bubba, the Clerk Assistant; and Bill Purdy and Sheila Embury. We're back to Brian Woolfenden, and that's where we came in.

If we might come to order, I was going to ask the leave of the meeting to change the order in which we deal with agenda items so that following the approval, if that's what it's going to be, of the minutes of the meeting of December 12, we might proceed to item 4(a), which is the reason Mr. Woolfenden, Mr. Swabey, Mr. Kruger, and Miss Landreth have come.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, we're still going to get back to business arising from the minutes, are we not?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, sure. I just thought we would change the order. Are you content?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You've all received the minutes of the December 12 meeting. Are there comments, or is there a motion?

MRS. CRIPPS: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried.

Now, if we could go to Chamber Renovations, that covers several headings. This is something that has been a matter of concern for possibly four or five years but has been deferred from time to time because of frugality. In the meantime, perhaps the problems have become a little bit worse.

The things we have to look at are, first of all, the rug, which was put in roughly 14 years ago. We have now run out of patching for it, so the only practical thing to do is to replace it.

Then we have another question. Because of the increase in the number of constituencies, we need four more desks and four more chairs. The desks are under construction. According to Mr. Swabey, they'll be ready sometime in late April or May; I've forgotten the exact date. In any case, it's likely to be in plenty of time before they're actually needed. They will, of course, copy the existing desks.

The chairs are a different matter. I believe I'm right in saying that the supplier of the present chairs has gone out of business. In order to try to match them, we would have to have them handmade at a fairly substantial cost. In addition to that, they're not as readily maintainable because of their covering, and in spite of the padding we have provided against the desks where the arms of the chairs bump into the desks, some damage does occur. Again, because of the nature of the covering, they are difficult to patch.

The sound system has never been really ideal. The difficulty is to get sufficient amplification so that the members in the remote corners of the Chamber — that is, the northeast and northwest corners — and people in galleries can hear well what's going on on the floor; I know I've had a number of people who have been in the Speaker's gallery. The difficulty seems to be that if you amplify the sound further, you get feedback because of the nature of the equipment. I'm just indicating this briefly; I'm not trying to pre-empt what somebody else is going to say.

Then there is the question of the television in the Chamber. The ideal, of course, would be to have a system whereby we could have the videotape produced centrally with the proper adjunct in the sound system. There's a question of how you achieve that. We have two concealed lenses now in the ventilators, and

they are used by the sound operator, as you know, to see members whose seats are close up below the press gallery and the position of the sound operator. Those two remote control lenses are used so the operator can see when members in that area get up to speak.

Perhaps with that brief overview we could go back to the beginning and discuss the rug. Mr. Swabey might like to give us a rundown on the rug situation.

MR. SWABEY: As Mr. Amerongen has pointed out, the carpet has lived its lifetime and is due for replacement. It's considered a maintenance item at this point in time. The cost of replacement for an equivalent carpet would probably be somewhere in the vicinity of \$75 a square yard. If we go to a custom type of carpet that can only be obtained from overseas, we're probably looking at something in the vicinity of \$77 to \$90 a yard, depending on how much of it you order. What we're talking about is replacing the carpet not only on the floor of the Chamber, but we're looking at replacing the carpet in the galleries and the areas adjoining the House itself. We would consider that as all one integral area. At this point in time I believe we are using carpet out of the robing room and the Sergeant-at-Arms' space to repair the Chamber carpet. So, in effect, the entire carpet should be replaced.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions of Mr. Swabey?

MR. GURNETT: Just a basic one. When you say that the carpet should be replaced, I'm wondering how you make a decision like that. You say it's due for replacement as routine maintenance. Who determines and how is it determined that it is due? I mean, I walk in there and it seems fine to me.

MR. SWABEY: Our general guideline for replacing carpet, not only in the Legislature Building and specifically the House but in all government-owned buildings, is when there are indications that there are threadbare areas, and there are threadbare areas within the Chamber. Added to that fact is that the sound reinforcement system is due for replacement as well, and all the carpet has to be torn up in order to accommodate some piping changes and those kinds of things. It would be impossible to

re-lay it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just before calling on Mr. Kowalski and then Mrs. Cripps, could I interject that there was a 10-year contract with AGT with regard to the sound system. It will run out in June, and so we have to take a serious look at it. We obviously don't want to have a lease of obsolete equipment.

MR. KOWALSKI: I've just had a meld here of two different conversations. I want to raise a question, too, about the rug replacement. Perhaps the first question should be: how does this associate itself or connect itself with the sound system?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, just what Lawrence said: you're going to have to tear up the rug to change the sound system. So if you're going to do anything on the sound system, you want to get the rug business out of the way so that you don't have to tear up a new rug.

MR. KOWALSKI: It's my understanding that the sound system is going to be looked at in June 1986.

MR. SWABEY: No. The sound system is being looked at at this point in time. There has to be sufficient lead time in order to order materials if, in fact, an evaluation indicates that it should be replaced. An evaluation has been done on it that indicated that the equipment is obsolete and technically out of date. I can ask Kelly to speak on that. He's the acoustics manager for our department, and perhaps he can elaborate a bit on the sound system if you want.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you have any more questions about the rug?

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes, I certainly do. There are some dollars that are arranged here in terms of dollars per yard for this rug. What would the total cost be for that dimension?

MR. SWABEY: The total cost for replacement of the carpet for the House and adjoining areas, including the galleries, would be in the vicinity of about \$93,000.

MRS. CRIPPS: My question is: what kind of time line are you looking at? If you're looking

at doing some renovations to the Assembly, when are you looking at doing them?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No fixed time line, but of course we have to avoid times when there's any possibility of the House sitting.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, there is a time line that we were given.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, but there's nothing decided.

MRS. EMBURY: The way this is outlined is very helpful, though.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. You want to get an idea. Did you have another question, Shirley?

MRS. CRIPPS: No, that's what I wanted to know.

MR. GURNETT: To come back to Ken's question about the total cost, I'm just wondering if there was any attempt to come up with another cost that would take into account the threadbare areas and the areas that would need to be taken up for the sound system that would allow something less than a complete replacement, or is that — I'm not a carpet person, so I don't know how reasonable that idea is.

MR. SWABEY: Normally, in any office building we would look at that aspect. If we could patch it, that's what we would do. However, we've run out of material to patch with. Perhaps I can let Cathryn, as an interior designer, speak on some of the rationale used in going for total replacement and things about aesthetics and that kind of thing. Cathryn, would you like to elaborate?

MISS LANDRETH: Generally speaking, when we're doing work in the Legislature Building, we try to maintain an integrity of design as well as a sort of historical feeling. It's very difficult to define areas. As you can see when you come in the door here in the anteroom to the committee room, there's a patch right in front of the threshold. That would mean that somehow we'd have to patch this part of the carpet, and if we didn't do this committee room, then we'd have green, red, green, red — that sort of thing

would start to happen. That's not something we'd like to do from an aesthetic point of view. Because we've run out of material in order to patch the carpet and have taken it out of the Sergeant-at-Arms' room and the robing room to patch in the House, we find that in terms of an aesthetic answer, we'd like to replace the whole thing.

There are two reasons for this. First of all, it would cost approximately \$41,000 to replace the House only, just the main floor. If, however, we do that, when we need to replace the rest of the carpet, we are requiring a considerably lesser quantity. The mills who run the carpet for us give us a price discount based on the larger quantity. If we buy it in two small chunks, it costs us more than it does to buy the whole thing at once. If we buy the whole thing at once, we add onto it a certain amount of maintenance yardage, which is kept downstairs in the basement and is used for replacement. It provides us an opportunity to get sufficient material to handle all the area and to patch carefully, and it maintains the aesthetic requirements of the space. We like to consider that as well. It seems to come third, after economics and practicality. Unfortunately, aesthetics are considered last, but they are a consideration. We can't do part of it without doing the rest, especially considering that the wear is so widely spread throughout the whole area.

MR. GURNETT: To follow that through a little bit, though, I'm still wondering about this whole system. With the replacement that the sound system is going to require, does that mean the carpet that's in the House has to be destroyed? It would seem to me that maybe you could remove it, do whatever needs to happen to the sound system, and put it back down.

MISS LANDRETH: The existing carpet? It's 14 to 15 years old and has reached what we've experienced to be the maximum life span of any woven wool carpet in a public space. Because it's a natural fibre that's woven and has jute backing and is hand-sewn together, when you lift it up and start to handle it to roll it up and take the seams apart in order to get it out of the way so they can have access to the floor to put the floor systems in and then try to put it down and sew it back together, it will have lost a lot of its structural integrity as a material. It

would be almost impossible to sew back. And because it is so badly worn in some places, when you start to lift it up the way you would any commercial carpet in an office or perhaps a residential carpet, it may just fall apart. We've experienced problems with the underlay having deteriorated to the point that when they vacuum the carpet, the underlay has powdered out and comes right through the face of the carpet. So essentially there's no underlay underneath this, and that's why it's wearing badly too. The carpet looks all right but structurally, as soon as you start to handle it, it will start to fall apart in unexpected and unfortunate places in which, because we don't have any left to repair it with, we won't be able to do anything about it.

Does that answer the question?

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, I have some concerns. The people from Public Works are saying that the carpet is 15 years old. Let's look at it in reality: the carpet is probably three or four years old. The Assembly sits for only four or five months of the year at the most, and the rest of the time it's pretty well closed up. Did we get a subgrade carpet put in in 1971 or '72, and what is the quality of the new carpet going to be in comparison to this? I don't think we should be coming back here in another 15 years saying that we have to put carpet in again when the carpet isn't 15 years old. It may be lying there, but it hasn't got the volume of traffic on it that an ordinary house has. I've got a place that's 13 years old, and the carpet is still good. There's a lot more traffic in my house than there is in the Assembly, because it's occupied 365 days of the year.

MISS LANDRETH: The carpet that you normally use in your house is a synthetic fibre, and the carpet we use in this House is wool and is made entirely of naturally fibres. You're right; it doesn't get traffic over it 365 days of the year. But because it's a natural fibre, it doesn't matter that it's not always being walked on; it will age anyway. Synthetic fibres do not do that to the same extent. It will age, dry out, and start to deteriorate in spite of the fact that nobody is standing on it. It is showing considerable wear in spite of the fact that, as you say, it's used only in limited situations. It's difficult to make a comparison of that nature, because a carpet will age naturally by itself,

without any traffic on it.

MR. PURDY: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. Why do we use a woven wool? Why don't we use a synthetic, the same as people do in their houses?

MISS LANDRETH: Unfortunately it's very difficult to get a synthetic fibre that will resemble this. It's very difficult to get anybody who will make us the kind of quality of carpet. It costs more. When we were doing another project here in the Legislature Building, we examined a local manufacturer, who has since gone out of business, who would make us a nylon carpet that would resemble the wool carpet in appearance, and it cost \$12 a square yard more to bring it in from Calgary than it costs to bring it in from London.

The other thing is that the carpet we're proposing is not 100 percent wool. It's a wool/nylon blend, which provides a considerably greater amount of wear than what exists in the House. We are trying to upgrade the quality of the carpet and provide longer wear and better appearance over the long run than is presently found with this carpet. So in terms of the economics per square yard and the fibre content, we think the carpet we've suggested will not only live longer and perform better than the existing carpet but will cost less to put in than would a synthetic carpet of a comparable appearance and quality.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, one of my questions has been answered. I've forgotten Jim's first statement when he was questioning about the rug. I had the same opinion you did. For the number of times we walk on it and around on it and maybe above it or whatever, I was very surprised to think it was that badly worn in spots. I hadn't noticed that until I went back not so long ago and had another look. For the benefit of this committee, if one went into the Legislature now and had a look at it, it's very obvious to see what the staff are saying about that rug. There are some incredible areas that they obviously patched very, very well, because we haven't noticed them. But I can certainly understand when they say they've patched and maybe repatched and used whatever extra pieces there are to do it. I think we would be quite agreeable to looking at replacing the carpet if we go and have a close

look at it.

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Chairman, I think my concern would still come back to the one I posed earlier about a second cost estimate. If you looked at all the areas that are damaged or places that are very badly worn, the areas that are unquestionably going to need replacement -- for example, the rug running in front of the chairs in the galleries where visitors sit -- do you have any idea of an alternative figure to that \$93,000 so that we could have an identical carpet made and replace everything that is going to need replacing and have some for the future as well, even at the higher price per yard?

MR. SWABEY: It would be a bit of a guess at this time. However, you could probably ballpark it in the vicinity of about -- I don't know -- \$25,000.

MISS LANDRETH: It would take more than that. We would probably have to do the whole House; that's 450 square yards. We would have to do this area behind the House, which is probably about 150 square yards. We'd be talking about somewhere in the neighbourhood of 600 to 700 square yards of carpet at \$75 a square yard.

MR. SWABEY: About \$45,000.

MISS LANDRETH: A little bit more. Probably around \$50,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If there are no further questions...

MRS. EMBURY: I'm sorry; I did want to...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wasn't going to end the discussion; I was going to say that it's very seldom that we in this committee meet so close to the subject under discussion. I wonder if we shouldn't go and have a view. The doors are open. Would you like to adjourn for five or six minutes and go and have a look at what we're talking about? Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Should we go ... Sorry; did you want to ask a question?

MRS. EMBURY: Could I ask another quick question, Mr. Chairman? I was wondering why we received only one sample. Was that requested of what would look nice in there? Why haven't we got a plain red sample or blue or green or something?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The red is already there, so we have two choices.

MRS. EMBURY: Are you saying that we can get the same rug again?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I don't know.

MISS LANDRETH: We could send them a sample of something that's unworn, yank a piece out from under a radiator and send it off, and they could tuft it up to almost match this carpet. It wouldn't be a problem. As Mr. Amerongen said, the reason we didn't submit samples of that is that we already have the carpet existing. When we provided samples, we were looking for alternatives to that which exists. In the plain colour, they will make in any colour at this quantity of carpet. We have sent three little tufts of yarn, which was all we could pull with tweezers out of a carpet existing in the building, and they custom dyed a colour to match it. That was on a relatively small quantity, out of consideration for the building it was going into. I don't think it would be a problem. We are dealing with a specific pattern and colour; that's why we have only one big sample.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's in the Chamber. If you'd like to go to the Chamber now, should we say -- what? -- the next five, six, or seven minutes?

MR. KOWALSKI: Five minutes should be more than enough.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I didn't bring my scout whistle.

[The committee adjourned from 1:30 p.m. to 1:38 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any more questions, any suggestions, any motions?

MR. KOWALSKI: It's a suggestion with a motion. With your permission, sir, I would like

to move that we table further discussion on this matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Did you have a question, Bill?

MR. PURDY: No. I was just going to look back at the schedule, Mr. Chairman, and try to determine in my own mind how everything inter-relates between the replacement of the carpet and the installation of the new sound system. Maybe somebody from the staff can indicate to us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe Mr. Swabey could do that.

MR. PURDY: It was indicated that the design is now under way for the new sound system.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not sure if that's the way to describe the activity.

MR. SWABEY: No, I wouldn't describe it as the design. Terms of reference have basically been agreed upon between the user and the consultant we have under hire to look into it.

MR. PURDY: That's Comtec, is it?

MR. SWABEY: That's right; Don Scheirer of Comtec.

MR. PURDY: Will he do the installation too?

MR. SWABEY: No. At this point in time we haven't definitely determined what method we would use for the installation of the sound system. We have someone in mind who has some credibility with regard to this kind of system. We looked at a couple of systems. We looked at the Victoria system and also the Regina system. Because the system in Regina has a television capability built into it and was considered state of the art, we based our design or terms of reference after that one. Comtec was associated with the design and installation of that system as well as Applied Electronics from Toronto. We have attempted to touch base with Applied Electronics to see what their interests would be and whether they would have time to be involved with this system if in fact we do go ahead.

MR. PURDY: The second question I have is: what is the projected cost of installation?

MR. SWABEY: You're referring to the sound system?

MR. PURDY: Yes.

MR. SWABEY: At this point in time we're probably looking at a figure somewhere in the vicinity of \$500,000.

MR. PURDY: Is that being budgeted for this year?

MR. SWABEY: Hopefully, that is to be an approved budget item for 1986-87.

MR. PURDY: What budget would that come under?

MR. SWABEY: '86-87.

MR. PURDY: No. Under what department?

MR. SWABEY: Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. PURDY: Okay. No other questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is the room in which the laws of the province are made. I think there's some responsibility to keep that in mind.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, there are a few things I'd like to say about this. First of all, this building isn't our building, nor is that our Chamber. It belongs to 2.5 million people. It's an architectural gem. I've had people visit from Europe many times, both before and since I was elected here, and the building as a whole, the outside and the main entryway, has been commented upon as being an architectural gem. I think the people of Alberta would not want to have a legislative Chamber that was getting any more run down in its appearance than it now is.

We've been told that the sound system has to be upgraded. I've had enough difficulty with the present one. In our visit to the Chamber five minutes ago, there is certainly no doubt about it; in places the rug is threadbare, and I doubt if it can be repaired any more. Perhaps it will get by one more sitting.

So I don't think there's much doubt about the decisions that have to be made. It's when we come to decisions and how we're going to time them that gets to be very difficult. I'd like to address the timetable that's in here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you looking at this, Dr. Reid?

DR. REID: No, I'm looking at the page immediately preceding that, with the actual dates on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. This one shows it in a different form, charted.

DR. REID: Yes, but I'd rather go to the actual dates that are on here. Having had experience before of things that didn't quite happen on schedule, if you look at this as a critical path -- our fall sitting. To have the critical path end October 15 and have only 15 days for checking the installation, testing it, and the installation of the rug, which would have to go in after the installation was complete -- I don't think that can be done in 15 days. I would like to suggest that all these things be worked up prior to the beginning of the fall sitting, and that actual installation occur right after the fall sitting.

I wouldn't like to see a situation where we were told on October 5, according to this schedule, that there was something the matter and that we didn't have a system at all. I think this critical time path that's on here is just a little too critical at the end of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's another thing that perhaps I should interject, in connection also with the motion to table. That is that we haven't yet approached AGT as to the terms on which they might give us a short-term extension of our 10-year lease which runs out in June. It seems to me that we're going to have to do that. Lawrence?

MR. SWABEY: Mr. Chairman, I think Dr. Reid wasn't looking at the amended construction time line.

DR. REID: I'm looking at the one I've got.

MR. SWABEY: There's an appendix B, amended construction timeline, which indicates that the on-site installation is complete by September

30. Is that the one you were looking at?

DR. REID: That's one I'm looking at.

MR. SWABEY: That's the one you were looking at.

DR. REID: I've had enough experience designing and building hospitals and other public buildings -- things are never on schedule at that last minute. If they're not on schedule, we're in trouble. So my suggestion is that we start the installation immediately after the fall sitting, not in the lead-up time to a fall sitting. If something goes wrong, what do you do? Explain to the population of Alberta: "Well, we can't have a fall sitting because the sound system is not ready"?

MRS. CRIPPS: That's nondebatable, so we're not debating it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll have to go back to the Thistle Rink. That's what they did in 1906.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, I guess I'm not sure what the purpose of this discussion is. If this is a -- what is it? A Government Services project item that we're looking at?

MR. SWABEY: A Public Works item.

MRS. CRIPPS: We don't have authority over the Public Works budget in any case.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We are in effect a client department, and we have authority over the Chamber.

MRS. CRIPPS: So that's why we're discussing it. But it's their budget item; it's not our budget item.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not only authority; we have responsibility for the Chamber.

DR. REID: It's our responsibility.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Directly it's the Speaker, under a statement of Executive Council some years ago, but I certainly wouldn't undertake a thing like this without your advice and concurrence.

MRS. CRIPPS: But the budget item is still someone else's, right? So we don't really . . .

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, if I can just explain. Although the budget item for a new correction centre goes through as mine, in actual fact the money is in the budget of the Department of Public Works.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're client departments of a department that gives service.

MRS. CRIPPS: Okay.

MR. GURNETT: Just two comments, Mr. Chairman, occur to me in connection with this. One is following up on what Dr. Reid said, the fact that this building belongs to the people of the province. I have a concern at this particular time about looking at some of the things we're looking at here with the dollar figures that are involved. Perhaps that can be more relevant to us sitting here if we think of it in terms of the way we responded a few minutes ago. We more than anybody else are familiar with the Chamber and the condition it's in, and yet most of us initially said that there isn't any serious problem there. Upon close examination and taking time to look carefully, we agreed that there are worn areas and there is some cause for concern. But it seems to me that if it hasn't occurred to us in our ongoing use and time spent in there close to the floor, the overall aesthetic effect and any negative impression created on visitors is pretty unlikely, because they're moving through fairly quickly and briefly.

So perhaps the issue coming up at this time can best be seen as a time for us to be alerted to a situation that needs attention within some immediate future of not too many years, but that combining the economy of the province at this time and the fact that the condition isn't obviously unreasonable and unacceptable, it's reasonable to look at some revised time line that's maybe even more modest than Dr. Reid's.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any other discussion of the motion to table? Incidentally, I think there are some who think a motion to table is not debatable. I don't hold with that view, and I have authority to back it up. Besides that, I think it would be a pity if a motion like that couldn't be discussed in the way we've just done.

MRS. CRIPPS: Now what does the motion to table entail? Just the floor or the sound system or . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: What's your intent, Ken?

MR. KOWALSKI: I think the motion I moved basically said to table discussion on this matter, and the matter we're talking about is the rug.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That doesn't dispose of the rest of the problem. We can do it piecemeal. All right. If that's the motion, all those in favour? A motion to table. Opposed? I make it four to two in favour.

MR. KOWALSKI: Four to two? There's one, two, three that I count. Did you vote to table it?

MR. GURNETT: Yes. To table.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we have it again? Those in favour of the motion to table. One, two, three. Oh, I thought . . . Oh, that's coffee in your hand.

MRS. CRIPPS: You must have counted me twice.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those opposed? Right. It's a tie vote. Aren't you kind.

MRS. CRIPPS: Now we've put you on the spot, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't know if this is regular or not, and I realize the same trick can be played over again, but what is your view with regard to the sound system? Is there a motion in that regard?

MR. KOWALSKI: Not a motion, Mr. Chairman, but I would certainly like to have a greater discussion on it. I heard something associated with the rugs. It seems to me I heard a figure of \$500,000 mentioned. I simply don't understand what the \$500,000 would be. Sitting in that Legislature for seven years probably puts me as the rookie around the table . . .

MR. GURNETT: Not quite.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's correct, Mr. Gurnett.



But in terms of the acoustics in the Chamber, that is the only area that has ever been raised with me by any of my colleagues. Some said that in certain parts of the Chamber they have difficulty hearing. If it costs \$500,000 to amplify a system, I would like that kind of explanation.

In terms of the microphone system, in terms of getting up and being recognized, I've not heard one person complain about it or say that there's a problem with it. So I don't understand what we're talking about for half a million dollars.

MR. PURDY: I'd just like to add to that too. Since the sound system has been upgraded, I've sat in all parts of that Legislature, including the Speaker's Chair, and I've had no difficulty hearing any member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The thing is that if we're going to change the rug, and all this wiring and stuff has to go on underneath it, it seems to me that there's some co-relation. We can go ahead, since the rug is a much smaller item, and change it and change it again if and when later on. Another point is that we're going to have to do something about renewing the lease. Now, I can make an attempt to get a lease from year-to-year if you like. It seems to me that there's some reasonable connection between the two subjects.

Coming back to the motion to table, I've had a little chance to think about it. If the motion to table is defeated, in other words if I vote against it, where does that leave us? The next thing we're going to have to do is make some decision either to discuss it further or to deal with it further. As I sense the mood of the committee, that isn't likely to happen. So I'm inclined to agree with the motion.

Is there a motion with regard to the sound system, or do you simply want to consider that to have been discussed and leave it at that?

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, you give a little bit of a scenario if we either table this discussion or ask for the report next month -- do something just to delay it a little bit. What is your time frame in regard to negotiating with AGT for June? It must be fairly soon that you have to talk to them and decide which way you're going to go.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we didn't know which way to go until we had the discussion here with the committee. If it was going to be dealt with soon, I could have spoken to AGT about perhaps a six-month extension. If it wasn't going to go soon, then I would have to consider a longer extension.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, you should have been contacting AGT anyway, because we know that unless something happens, the House is going in on April 3 and we're certainly going to be here after June 1.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're not tied to AGT. The lease runs out. There's a possibility of getting it done by private enterprise.

MR. PURDY: How long would it take to get that in place?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't know.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, in view of the decision to table the issue of the rug, from the report we've had from people who are experts on the matter I think we have thereby made the decision that we are not going to do anything with the sound system. If we do something with the sound system, we probably won't have a rug on the floor, or it will be in worse shape than it is now. So the situation is that it has now been put into your hands almost automatically to negotiate with AGT about the continuation of the present system. Whether that's going to be for six months or on a yearly renewal basis, in the process of discussing it with AGT I think you and your staff will come up with some numbers that will make it pretty obvious which way to go.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right.

DR. REID: I would guess it's going to be on a year-by-year renewal contract.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would seem to be the sensible thing to do. Did you have something else, Shirley?

MRS. CRIPPS: Yes. What does this \$500,000 do? Does it purchase the system? Does it put the system in? You're talking about a rental with somebody. What's the ongoing cost after

that?

MR. KRUGER: If I may answer that question, first of all, the primary reason for replacing the sound system is that the existing system isn't compatible with any sort of video upgrade in the future. So if that becomes reality, then the entire audio portion would have to be replaced anyway. The operational problems with the system aren't perhaps evident to members on the floor, but they are definitely a problem for the operator, principally in controlling feedback and so on. Most of the functions of the existing system are manual; there is very little automated control. It's very difficult for an operator, even an experienced operator, to maintain good clarity on the tapes which eventually go to Hansard.

So if we're looking at replacing the system in order to maintain good intelligibility at floor level, overcome these operational problems, and update to video, we need to start right at the beginning, which is at the microphones and speakers on individual members' desks, and go all the way up to the control console, which includes all the amplifiers and the recording facilities and the operator's control console as well. We're looking at 80-plus microphones and loudspeakers and then all of the associated hardware that follows. So it's not simply a matter of changing a few speakers or something along those lines.

MR. PENGELLY: Mr. Chairman, may I ask these ladies and gentlemen over here: what are the structural changes?

MR. KRUGER: In terms of the disruption of the carpet and so on, we may need to run larger conduit under the floor, because some of the cabling in the microphones may be different from what we have at the moment and so on. It depends on exactly what kind of equipment is used and so on. There will be a need to distribute this system throughout the floor -- essentially, a new network.

MR. SWABEY: I may add as well that if you go that far, you're accommodating for video at a future date, and structurally we would make provision for that at the same time. So that would already be there, and there would be minimal disruption at some time in the future when video was given a go-ahead. As well, the

relocation of the sound console would probably require some structural changes.

MR. PENGELLY: Where would that be located?

MR. SWABEY: We don't know yet. That's a difficult task. Ideally, the sound console should be located so that he has a full view of the House -- probably opposite where the Speaker sits.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In the location of the clock.

MR. SWABEY: Ideally, that would be the place.

MRS. EMBURY: I was going to make a motion, Mr. Chairman; I don't know if Shirley would like to speak before.

MRS. CRIPPS: While I have empathy with the problem, when I think of some of the budget items that have been cut and will be cut -- in my constituency, for instance -- I'm really concerned about spending that kind of money.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any other discussion? Sheila is about to move a motion.

MRS. EMBURY: I'd like to move, Mr. Chairman, that we receive a report at our next meeting of Members' Services in regard to the contract with AGT and also, if it's possible, to seek information in regard to what a contract with a private company might include, just as an example, as to cost.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're looking at two things. If we continue with the present equipment, assuming AGT doesn't take it out, and ask a private operator to maintain it, that's one thing. The other, of course, would be to have AGT leave it there and have them continue to maintain it.

MRS. EMBURY: I'm sorry I didn't make myself clear, Mr. Chairman. I would have assumed that if I received certain information that we could have a short-term contract with AGT to maintain the same equipment for six months, a year, or whatever, that's one decision. But if you brought back some facts and figures in regard to using a private company, then I would have assumed that was looking at new equipment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I see.

MRS. EMBURY: Frankly, I'm in favour of this assessment and, probably over a certain period of time, changing it. I find this information we've received today, the written and also the people coming to talk to us, very valuable. Surely communication is an area we have to keep up in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The rental amount for AGT has not been included in the Legislative Assembly Office budget. It also has been coming out of Public Works, Supply and Services. They're the ones who signed the contract. Would you happen to know how much that is?

MR. SWABEY: Yes, I do. The rental for that system on a yearly basis is in the vicinity of \$60,000. The cost for the maintenance and operation of it by AGT, above that \$60,000, is around \$40,000. Now, that depends on how long the sessions go. That's counting on two sessions a year consisting of probably from the middle of October until perhaps before Christmas and then going back in again in the spring until June.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you take a 10-year lease at \$60,000 a year and \$40,000 for maintenance and operation, that puts the \$500,000 in context.

MR. SWABEY: Mr. Chairman, if in fact we were to negotiate something with AGT, we would have to arrange for a lease buy-out agreement with them to purchase that equipment. It wouldn't be practical to remove that equipment and then have a private concern come in here and install their kind of equipment. We would be looking at the \$500,000 type of thing again and would not be guaranteed of what kind of design or system we would get. I can't help but emphasize that in order to put a sound reinforcement system into the Chamber, it takes a lot of design effort to be able to come up with a system that works well and is state-of-the-art.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Walter, did you have your hand up? No. Is there anything further? Have we a motion?

MRS. CRIPPS: I have another question, Mr. Chairman. If you put in the \$500,000 system, what would your rental and operation and maintenance be on that?

MR. SWABEY: The operation for it would probably be in the vicinity of \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year. That would ensure that there are technically competent people on-site during the session.

MRS. CRIPPS: But the \$500,000 is a purchase, and there would be no rent.

MR. SWABEY: That's a capital cost to purchase and install.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there anything else before I put the question?

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, if we really had a problem, we'd have to do something about it, but we don't really have a problem. So what is the problem?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, partly it's the fact that we were considering the replacement of the rug and partly the fact that the lease is about to run out.

MRS. CRIPPS: Did I understand you to say that we had to have a buy-out, that we can't just renegotiate the lease?

MR. SWABEY: We could renegotiate the lease, I presume. I thought that one of your other options was to buy it out and operate it ourselves as is.

MRS. CRIPPS: Oh, no.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for Mrs. Embury's motion? Those in favour of the motion? Those opposed? Carried. I think that completes our consideration of the Chamber. I'd like to thank very much Mr. Woolfenden, Miss Landreth, Mr. Swabey, and Mr. Kruger. It's been very helpful. I think we've all gotten a lot of useful information which we won't lose; it will be in the transcript. Thank you very much.

Can we go back to our agenda now? We have a couple of items. It says Business Arising from the Minutes; actually that refers to the minutes of the November 20 meeting, not the December

12 one. There were two items there: one was the striking of a committee to consider the question of postage and the division of costs between members' constituency offices and central administration, and the other was a report on the cost of the mailing at Christmas. Is there anything on the committee?

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I believe that Alan was actually designated as our chairman, and since he's not here today, I'd like to report that we have not met but are planning to do so. For the convenience of the subcommittee, it looks like we'll probably start working as soon as we're here for session in the spring.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then perhaps we could leave that topic until the next time when we have Alan here — incidentally, he did expect to be here when we telephoned everybody — and go on to item 4(b), Personnel Administration Officer.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, under Business Arising from the Minutes, the minutes we've just looked at for December 12, there are two points. One deals with minute 85.172 and the other one with minute 85.173. There was a question there of the administration dealing with the review of that and coming back, and I wonder where we are with that. Have notifications been sent to Members of the Legislative Assembly indicating an adjustment with respect to those allowances?

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I do know that the budget figures were adjusted to reflect the increases that were moved. I don't believe there has been notification to members to indicate that an adjustment was made.

MR. KOWALSKI: That has happened with respect to these monthly statements all members get?

MR. ELIUK: Yes, it has.

MR. KOWALSKI: Very good. I just haven't bothered to look at the most recent ones.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does that dispose of both points, Ken?

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes, it does.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You may remember that we were referring from time to time to the Fleming report. One of the recommendations was that there should be a personnel administration officer in the office of the Legislative Assembly. In your supporting material, under 4(b), you have a chart that shows the present situation and the consequences of it. I'm referring to this chart. The first column shows the duties that would be performed by the position, the second one shows what the situation is now with regard to those duties, and the third one shows the consequences of the present situation. The very first column shows roughly the percentage of time that would be spent on the various aspects of the job.

There's one point that I think I should mention. I believe I'm correct. Personnel services have been decentralized from Personnel Administration to the various departments. The personnel officer is the one who looks after those things, but of course we have no personnel officer. We have someone who goes under a similar name, but it's a clerical position and doesn't perform any of the functions.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I was under the impression — and it's partially mistaken, I will admit — that we were going to have a meeting and look at the Fleming report, I believe it's called, which is something we haven't done. I have the minutes of November 1985, and you are correct in doing what you're doing. Quoting you, it says that "we will then come back to this committee with some proposals," which I understand you're doing. While we as members received copies of that report, I still feel kind of strongly that it would have been helpful to have an overall discussion and look at what was in the report and where the committee sees the overall Legislative Assembly going: how much we want to do, how much we find practical, how much we feel is not applicable, and things like that.

I want to throw that out as something I thought we were going to consider doing instead of coming forth with specific recommendations, as you have done at this time. I don't know if anybody else had that impression or wants to comment on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Although the proposals all deal with the Legislative Assembly, they are not so closely inter-related that individual ones on individual topics can't be considered on their own. The main comments in the Fleming report with regard to personnel would be addressed by a consideration of these two positions.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, having briefly scanned that report and having looked at the minutes of the November 20 meeting, I inadvertently acquired the same impression as Sheila. To actually start discussions about appointments or creation of two positions before this committee really goes over that report is maybe a little bit cart before horse. With all my apologies to the Clerk and the other people who are functioning in the current system, which I think has its difficulties, I think the committee should have a good look at the report and discuss whether we should accept it in part or in total, whether we agree with the philosophy behind it, or whether with our own knowledge around this table of what happens around this building and in the whole process of the Legislative Assembly, we might have some ideas that are better than what's in that report. It's conceivable. It's not highly likely, but it's conceivable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I wouldn't be excessively skeptical about that.

DR. REID: I think we should do that first; in other words, have a look at the proposals in that report and the people we currently have and whether they are functioning to the best they can or whether reallocations will do some of it, rather than just creating new positions and appointing new people in the concept of the typical -- and I'm not using the word pejoratively -- bureaucratic pyramid. We all know what that does. We've been doing this throughout government. In spite of what is said, all the positions that are being abolished are not at the lowest level of stenographer or clerk. They're being abolished right through the system, up to the director level. We're looking at being leaner and meaner and equally effective.

Perhaps this committee should look at that report before we start implementing bits of it on an ad hoc, piece-by-piece basis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that a comment or a motion?

DR. REID: It can easily be converted into a motion, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wasn't trying to tempt you.

Is there any other discussion? The discussion now obviously relates to this item and the next one on the agenda. If there's no other discussion, is someone ready to move or adopt a motion?

DR. REID: I move that the committee consider the Fleming report before we implement any of the suggestions in it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion of that motion?

MR. PURDY: I would like to add, or maybe Dr. Reid can suggest it, that it be a meeting just to look at the Fleming report.

DR. REID: Yes, a specific meeting. Sorry; I was presuming that was how we would do it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does that mean the motion is amended that individual items from the Fleming report will not be considered until the committee has had a meeting devoted to that report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Contrary? Carried.

When you talked about building pyramids, you made me feel like a pharaoh.

MRS. EMBURY: That's a compliment.

DR. REID: I'm not quite sure, Mr. Chairman, how small the point is on the top of the pyramid.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's the base that counts. That determines the height.

Can we go on? The next item is really just a report item. There are some expenditures that are being adjusted, that are being dealt with by the Clerk and the members involved, with regard to the fiscal year and the constituency office allowances. Just in case you had any concern about that, I should mention to you that

the situation is well in hand, and I don't think there needs to be any particular concern.

There is something else, though, that is of more concern than that -- actually two or three things. There seems to be a feeling around that there may be a general election coming up within the next 18 months.

DR. BUCK: Do you want the date?

MRS. CRIPPS: What's your guess, Walter?

DR. REID: Is it not 19 months, Mr. Chairman?

MR. PURDY: Could be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyway, the question arises whether in a period of such anticipation something should be done with regard to prorating constituency office allowances. Exactly how it's done, I'm not sure, but we did find that something like that is done federally. The possibility that arises is this. For the sake of an example, let's assume that members' constituency office allowances total \$10,000 and that there's an election in November, which would be about seven months into the fiscal year. The incumbent, who has access to that allowance during those seven months, could conceivably deplete the allowance, and the next member coming up in the same constituency would have less money to go on unless there was a special warrant or some adjustment to give a pro rata share of a year's funding following an election. I realize this doesn't apply everywhere. We have some new boundaries and some new constituencies, but in a large number of cases it will apply.

The question for the committee is this: should we consider a formula whereby the expenditures and/or commitments against constituency office allowances during the fiscal year about to begin should be prorated so that one-twelfth may not be exceeded in any month, with a proviso that if you are under one-twelfth, you can carry it over to the following month?

I sent you a draft text for your consideration. The idea hasn't changed, but I believe we have a much better and simpler text here, which I'll distribute if there's some serious interest in the thing. It's very, very simple, and perhaps instead of each of us trying to read it while others are discussing, I'll read it because

it's very quick and very brief. It would be an amended order 4.1:

(1) Expenditures and commitments from or against a Member's constituency allowances during or with respect to any month of the 1986-87 fiscal year shall not exceed 1/12 of the total of that Member's constituency allowances for that fiscal year.

(2) If in or with respect to any month of that fiscal year the amount of expenditures and commitments is less than such 1/12, the remainder may be carried forward to any subsequent month or months of that fiscal year and be added to such 1/12.

(3) This amending order shall have no further effect after the date in that fiscal year of an Alberta general election.

I suppose that the administration can say: "Whatever comes in, if it comes within the terms of the constituency office funding, we'll approve. It's no concern of ours whether there's equity between two members representing the same riding for different fractions of the year. It's no concern of ours whether the second member is out of luck financially and has to go for a special warrant or whatever."

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, to make sure I understand how that would work. In most instances I'm sure that we probably all follow the common practice that we send out material presessionally and postsessionally, so you have a large glob of expenditure before the session to inform your constituents that there's a session coming up and, at the termination of that spring session, you send out some more material. Then maybe you don't use too much of your funding until the fall session, when you repeat that again. From the experience I've had, you don't have a constant amount that you use. You have a feast or famine type of thing. If we wanted to send a postsessional mail-out, would we have sufficient funds to do it under this formula?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you stayed within the twelfth. It would depend when the election came and how many months allowance you wanted to combine for a one-shot effort.

DR. BUCK: Let's say that the election was called four years from the time of the last one, and those of us in our enthusiasm spend all the

funding that's available to us by November. I can certainly see that happening. But if we were going to have a spring election, I think people would be very irresponsible if they were to spend all the funds available to us as MLAs to try to get re-elected, using the taxpayers' money. I can see that there would be a need for the formula you're speaking of, Mr. Chairman, but in the normal course of events it seems to me that we expend a fair amount before and after the session. At least that's the way it applies in my case.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There will be difficulties no matter which way you do it. When you refer to a member being irresponsible, Walter, I'm sure that that is never done intentionally.

DR. BUCK: No, no.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyway, it's an option. Dr. Reid is waiting to be recognized.

DR. BUCK: Just to finish up. The reason I'm asking that question is to see the practical application of how we as members do it as it relates to what we're trying to do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

DR. BUCK: I understand and support what you say, Mr. Chairman, about putting a safeguard in so an incumbent doesn't spend all the funding for the person who maybe loses or just doesn't run again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As I say, we're not trying to urge it on the committee. It's just that we should be aware of the possibilities that lie before us. If the committee wants to adopt a safeguard, then of course we in the administration will be guided by that.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, my first response the day you spoke to me about it was that I thought it was a good idea.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's not the way it came across, Ian.

DR. REID: My first response. By the end of that conversation I had already thought. My immediate response -- let's put it that way.

The more I thought about it, the more

difficulty I have with it. First of all is the start of the fiscal year on April 1. As Walter has so aptly put it, I think there is a marked tendency for all of us to try and communicate with our constituents leading up to the beginning of that sitting. That is going to happen out of this year's budget, so that's no problem. Some people like to do something following the throne speech or the combination of the throne speech and the budget.

DR. BUCK: Right.

DR. REID: Those who are in favour of the items that are in it and those who are not so much in favour have equal urge to communicate with their constituents. I think that tends to be a fairly heavy expenditure time for some of us, in conjunction with Walter's item of the postsitting communication. To say that that is going to be limited to -- what? -- three or probably, at the most, a quarter of the allocation to be available for those purposes is going to be difficult to live with. I think most of us would find that a considerable percentage, certainly much more than a quarter, of our total expenditures are related to the spring sitting, the events preceding, during, and following it.

We have then got the difficulties you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, of the change in boundaries and the new constituencies. To take some examples, around this table there are people who have very significant changes in their boundaries. They are losing one bit and gaining somewhere else or just losing or just gaining, depending on the redistribution in their immediate area. But the existing boundaries and the existing populations apply until the writ is issued. While the writ is issued, during the election period, of course most of these expenditures can't be made. Then we're going to be looking at a different set of constituency budgets after the election. I don't know which mathematical whiz kid or computer whiz kid is going to be able to correlate the twelfths with the twelfths pre- and post-election. I don't think it can be done. I've thought about this at some length.

Then of course we have the fact that there are at least two members who will not be around this table after the election. I regret both of their departures. I won't say about some other potential ones that might happen to

the same degree.

DR. BUCK: Like all of us.

DR. REID: We're all at risk at nominations, and we're all at risk during the election. It's very difficult to say what will happen pre- and post-election in the Stony Plain and Calgary North West constituencies. Their replacements will certainly not be the incumbents.

MR. PURDY: I've still got another day to file my papers.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, the difficulty is that when you look at these different things I'm talking about, I think we have to once more behave as a responsible committee, to accept that the 79 members of the government Legislature and the 83 subsequent ones are going to be responsible representatives of the people of Alberta.

These allowances were created so we could communicate with our constituents in one way or another. I think that's an ongoing responsibility. It varies from time to time during the year. I don't think anybody is going to blow the whole lot and leave their successors in a financially strapped situation. I think every member of the Legislature is responsible enough. First of all, I don't think we can dream up a system that will work, and I don't think we should try. Also, I'm prepared to trust all 79 current members to behave responsibly. I think we should table that item.

MR. KOWALSKI: I think the eloquence of both Dr. Buck and Dr. Reid sort of sums up basically what I wanted to talk about. I am just going to raise one other thing for a question out of interest. My recollection of the events in 1982 was such that there were no major problems with respect to any of these allowances. In fact, my understanding was that a fair number of individuals left more in than was actually taken out. If anything, it wasn't a concern about an hon. member abusing anything. In fact they bent over backwards to leave more to their successor than they might have.

MR. PURDY: I think the other three gentlemen have summed it up pretty well, Mr. Chairman. I don't think we have to proceed with this. I wouldn't even have it tabled. I make a motion

that we not accept the . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We don't have to do anything; just pass it over. We've discussed it. We don't need a motion.

MR. PURDY: We don't have to have a motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Not unless you want to do something. If you want to adopt it, then of course . . .

MR. PURDY: I thought it was an order of business you brought to to the meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know, but it's only up for discussion. It's up to the meeting if you want to move a motion or not.

MR. PURDY: But it's not necessary?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If nothing happens, nothing happens.

The next item is that we have a vacancy in Calgary West as of a few days ago. The question is: what happens to the constituency office funding there during the interval between that and a new member being elected for that seat? Our proposal is that we do the same as we did in Spirit River-Fairview when Grant Notley died. In other words, we continued to pay the rent; we continued to pay the constituency office secretary. The understanding was that matters which had been referred for that member's attention, to the knowledge of the secretary, would be dealt with to the extent that she could and if not would be referred to someone else according to the wishes of the person who had raised the matter, and that new matters would be dealt with similarly, the constituency secretary being given the responsibility, whenever a new matter is brought in by a constituent, of asking that person, "Where do you want this referred?" and then referring it accordingly. It's very simple.

It worked out well in Spirit River-Fairview. I have no reason to think it wouldn't work well in Calgary West. There is a point of view that says: no member, no allowances. But I think we have to look at the other point of view. That is that the allowances are not there for the members; they're there for service to constituents.



HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: To the extent that we can, we should not exacerbate the loss which the [constituents] already have in the form of services because of not having a sitting member.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's agreed. Given the financial implications, I think it would be well that we have a formal motion approving that arrangement.

DR. BUCK: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. Buck, seconded by Mrs. Embury. All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

There is one other item of inquiry that we would like to put to the committee. As you know, we have a promotion allowance which permits giving out pins and things like that. Suppose, for example, a constituent comes along and says, "I want umpteen pins; I'm going to Moscow or Regina or wherever." And it so happens that those pins aren't available at that time — I'm just taking an example — and the constituent said, "Well, if you can give me the money, I know where I can get them." May the constituency office allowance be used in that way, where instead of giving out pins, for example, the member would be giving out a small amount of cash?

DR. REID: No, sir. If the person says they know where they can get them and they're not available through the normal channels, I think the constituency office should get them and hand over the pins but certainly not the cash.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In other words, you're saying that the allowance may be used only in kind and not in cash.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Since that also has financial implications and the thing could arise, could there be a formal motion to the effect that, as I read the intent of the meeting, constituency allowances may not be used for the purpose of disbursing cash.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, if I can just . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's not good. No, that's not a good text, because actually we're disbursing cash when we buy stuff that members order.

DR. REID: Exactly. I was just going to say that that causes a little difficulty with local purchases, doesn't it, or purchasing stamps.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shall we say that they can't be used for cash that goes out by way of token or gift, or donation for that matter?

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, if I can just get back in. This is difficult because we don't want to put a member at risk of being contrary to a motion of this committee. I'm not aware of any examples where anything untoward has happened, but it was just the thought of giving somebody money to go out and buy tokens and then they negotiate a lower price and that sort of thing. That would disturb me.

The difficulty of controlling the expenditures for local purchase of items for the constituency office or local purchase of souvenirs or mementos for people who have contributed to the community and that sort of thing — I don't want us to box everybody in with a very rigid ruling of this type.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you concerned about retroactivity? If you are, I was going to suggest that whatever is passed, if there is a restriction of that kind passed, should take effect perhaps March 15 or something like that — just time enough to give us a chance to send copies out to all the members.

MRS. CRIPPS: I thought we'd already dealt with the content. Why deal with the specific wording?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We dealt with it in a general way, and that specific possibility is not covered in the present text.

MR. PURDY: Has there been occasion to have that particular question asked?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There could be a borderline situation. I don't know to what extent it may materialize.

MR. PURDY: I thought that the way it is right now, with the purchase or requisition book that we all have in our offices and that we have to sign before any disbursement is allowed, the control is on it right there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The only thing is that what can happen is that a member can go out and get something. You see, we have no rule. There's nothing in the orders of this committee that says that funds may be committed only by means of that book. Sure, as far as I know the book is being generally used, and I think it's going to be effective.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, under the Financial Administration Act we operate under, there's no way we can get cash, is there? Or there's no way we can give anyone any.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can get reimbursed for something that you've committed.

DR. REID: It's a really difficult one, Walter.

DR. BUCK: It's the same thing when we pay our postage. We have to give them cash or a personal cheque or whatever the post office will accept, and we get reimbursed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. Yes, the question of cash can arise.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, the manner in which this subject matter was raised was with respect to the question of giving people money to buy pins and the like. I think we've already dealt with that.

This other area that we've now moved into is one that I guess is very difficult for me as a member to deal with unless there's a specific example that comes before us. I think I would really prefer letting the matter go. We've now brought in a new system with respect to these purchase books and the like. I'm not aware of any problem that has been caused by any Member of the Legislative Assembly with respect to this. But should there be an item of a questionable nature that would go through the Director of Administration, I hope we would be alerted to it. Perhaps at that time we might be able to review it further.

I think we've been through this kind of mechanism on several occasions in the past

several years now, and we've always found that there was a solution to the matter without it ever becoming a problem of magnitudes and major sorts. It's very difficult to deal with the second item you brought here, because it tends to be of a hypothetical nature. I don't know if we can make rules on the basis of just presupposing something may be happening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As a matter of fact we do.

MR. KOWALSKI: I appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We try to foresee what's going to happen, and we make a ruling.

MR. KOWALSKI: But in this case I have great difficulty visualizing in my own mind. We could probably be here for many hours today just worrying about the words we would want to use.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, as Ian said, on second look I can certainly understand this happening, and we as members all know how it happens. A guy says: "Walt, I'm going to the Brier tomorrow. I haven't got any pins." The guy wants 50 Alberta flag pins, and the guy down at the local store has 50 flag pins. There's no way I can physically get in here and get them, so we buy 50 flag pins and reimburse it. I can certainly see that . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: You can do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right, and you're not going to be using an order form for it either.

DR. REID: But the thing is, Mr. Chairman, that it's Walt who buys the pins, and Walt sends in the requisition to be reimbursed. He doesn't give the cash to the individual.

DR. BUCK: Exactly.

DR. REID: So it can be handled that way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I understood Walter to give the guy the cash to go to the store and buy the pins.

DR. BUCK: No. I go down and buy the pins. That's the key, as Ian is saying. We as members are responsible because we are expending the taxpayers' money. You don't give the guy the

cash, even if you have to take a half day off, Ian, to go and do it.

DR. REID: Exactly. Then you've got your signature for the finance administration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So is the consensus of the committee: no change in the text of the present order?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's one other item which I could perhaps bring up under Other Business. Members have acquired office automation equipment in various constituency offices. From time to time I have had the temerity to raise the question of standardization, and I can see the time coming when it may well be that by means of that kind of equipment, members may wish to access information which is available here centrally. Also, there's the fact that once that kind of equipment is bought, notwithstanding that it is bought out of a member's constituency allowance, which ordinarily is for consumables rather than capital items, those capital items become public property. Consequently, our administration eventually has responsibility for their disposal.

Having that in mind, it seems to me that it would be well to say again that if members intend to acquire any kind of equipment like that, they get equipment which can speak to the equipment that is here, that is compatible. We inquired about what happens in other provinces. In Ontario, for example, that's what happens: they're asked to buy equipment that is compatible with whatever the central equipment is in Ontario. I've forgotten; Wang or something.

What we're proposing to do in this regard is send out to the members, courtesy of Mr. Bubba, a memorandum which will list -- I think it will be a fairly short list -- the kinds of equipment that can speak to what we have in the Assembly. As you know, we have NBI in the Library and the Clerk's office, as well as in Hansard and in my office. So we'll send out a list of equipment makes that are compatible, to assist members in case they're making that kind of decision.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, in supporting that -- Don, you use this any way you want to -- it was

brought to my attention that this problem arose in our city hall, where the city of Edmonton was using XYZ equipment and the mayor had something else. He wanted to access the central system, and I guess they spent a bloody arm and a leg to make his Mickey Mouse outfit compatible with the ... I don't know whether that's just a rumour or not, but this fellow gave it to me on good authority. That's an example of what you're speaking of, Mr. Chairman, isn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. There was an outfit in Calgary that was developing software to help computers talk to each other, and I was told -- I think it was by Robert here -- that there can be a situation where the cost of preparing usable software for such a purpose can exceed the capital cost of the equipment you're getting.

DR. BUCK: I guess this is exactly what happened in this situation. That's what we're trying to prevent, isn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Another plug for standardization. Incidentally, I would hope that eventually this committee would take the bull by the well-known handles and make it a rule that the allowances may be used only for compatible equipment.

MR. KOWALSKI: On this point, Mr. Chairman, when we had a subcommittee of this particular committee dealing with this new equipment that was coming into the Legislative Assembly, one of the thoughts basically was: "How do we make it compatible? How do we make the existing equipment that is currently in place in constituency offices compatible with what we've got here in the Legislature Building?" While you did mention one example, I would also think that one of the things this committee should be looking at in the future is how we are going to make existing equipment compatible with the material and equipment that exists in this particular building.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not sure that's feasible, but perhaps we could have a report. Would you like to make an observation about that, Robert?

MR. BUBBA: Not right now. Since I have very little idea of what's out there, I'd hate to make any comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Since Bob is suffering from disinclination, we'll have to do without the comment.

MR. KOWALSKI: In terms of the future discussion we're going to have on this matter, that would be one item I would like to draw to the attention of my colleagues.

MRS. EMBURY: Another point the subcommittee discussed and I raised at the time we were approving the estimates of the Legislative Assembly is in regard to electronic mailing within the building and whether or not we all quite understand what is meant by those two terms. I believe that at that time Mr. Stefaniuk said that that was possible within the system we have today, but I'm sure there is something required. I think some of us -- myself for one member of this committee -- need to know exactly what we're talking about. I'm assuming it means that Chuck could talk to my office or something on the computer. That's what I understand about electronic mailing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Instead of sending a memo.

MRS. EMBURY: As one example. I don't know how much it means that I could talk to my colleagues or whatever.

So I was wondering if it would be possible within the next while -- I don't know if anybody wants to set a time frame; I assume it would be Bob, under the direction of the Clerk -- to have some type of report or investigation of what is possible within our present system and what services would be offered to members. Is that a reasonable request?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you referring now to the offices in the Annex and under the dome, or are you including constituency offices?

MRS. EMBURY: At this particular time it's just the Annex and the Legislative Assembly building.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sure we can do that. I don't think it takes a formal motion. Is there any other Other Business?

MRS. EMBURY: I'm sorry to delay this meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're doing very well.

MRS. EMBURY: Further to what my colleague said in regard to looking at -- I guess it would be helpful, and Bob declined to comment on the situation because I guess none of us really totally knows what is out there. A lot of it depends on what members are nominated again for another election. I think it would be helpful if we could gather the information as to how many units are in constituency offices.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And what kind?

MRS. EMBURY: Yes. And that will be influenced, of course, by the memo that's coming out with regard to compatibility.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We just have to take it out of the inventory; it's there.

MRS. EMBURY: I realize that when I suggested this at the time of the estimates, there was going to be a cost item in regard to looking at doing a pilot project or something, but I guess it would be interesting to know what is out there. Then if members are seeking re-election, I would suspect that some of them might be willing to get onto this and get it connected up to be used. I've had that request from some of our members. Is that possible again?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. I think what we'll do is send it out to you. There's no need to wait for another meeting. Then you have a chance to read it ahead of time.

MRS. EMBURY: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other Other Business? The date of the next meeting.

MR. PURDY: I think we've committed ourselves to a study of the Fleming report, and we should probably do it before the House convenes on April 3. We should look at our calendars as to who's available.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is Tuesday a good day?

MR. PURDY: As long as the airbus is on time, any day is a good day.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next Tuesday is the 11th, and the one after that is the 18th.

MR. PURDY: May I suggest the 18th?

MRS. EMBURY: There's the 25th too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And then comes the 25th.

MR. PURDY: Let's go with the 25th.

MRS. CRIPPS: What about the . . . You're in cabinet. I was going to say the 26th, because the 27th we have to be here anyway.

DR. REID: I think most people will probably be here that week.

MRS. EMBURY: Is a Thursday better?

MR. KOWALSKI: Tuesday the 25th sounds fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The 25th?

DR. BUCK: Mr. Chairman, I know that the hon. Member for Spirit River-Fairview and I both have commitments that afternoon at that time, 3 o'clock.

DR. REID: The same commitment?

DR. BUCK: Yes.

DR. REID: My goodness, Walter.

DR. BUCK: We're taking the university by storm.

MRS. EMBURY: Is that on the 25th?

DR. REID: Can we make it the 18th?

MR. PENGELLY: The 18th?

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about the 18th?

MR. PURDY: It's no good for me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about the morning of the 25th? Can you confine your iniquity to the afternoon, Walter?

DR. BUCK: I try to spread it throughout the whole day.

MRS. CRIPPS: Are you paid by the hour?

MR. PURDY: What about the morning of the 24th, or is that inconvenient?

MRS. EMBURY: It's Easter Monday.

MR. GURNETT: Did we eliminate the 26th?

MRS. EMBURY: Yes. Two of us are in cabinet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. It's cabinet day.

MR. KOWALSKI: What about the morning of the 25th? Is that a problem?

MR. CHAIRMAN: How about that?

MR. PURDY: It's okay here.

MR. KOWALSKI: 9:30.

DR. REID: I'll be a little late.

MR. PENGELLY: I won't be here if it's in the morning.

MRS. CRIPPS: You won't be here?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can you meet on the telephone, Nigel?

MR. PENGELLY: I could.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's a little awkward because the room where that connection is is so small. I'll see if we can have that equipment put in here.

MRS. CRIPPS: What about Friday?

MRS. EMBURY: What about March 20?

MR. PENGELLY: What's wrong with 1 o'clock on the 25th? Is that no good?

MR. CHAIRMAN: One o'clock on the 25th, we lose Walter and . . .

MR. GURNETT: We have to leave at 2:30.

DR. BUCK: One o'clock on Tuesday is all right.

MRS. EMBURY: Could we have a lunch

meeting?

MR. PENGELLY: Twelve o'clock?

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about 12:30?

DR. REID: Why not start at noon on the 25th?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you want us to bring in a bite?

HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

DR. BUCK: You're buying; we're eating.

MR. KOWALSKI: So that's noon on the 25th.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's noon on Tuesday the 25th. Anyone still have problems with that?

MR. PENGELLY: I can make it by noon.

MRS. CRIPPS: I don't know how I'm going to check out the auctions if we go at noon on Tuesday.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess that's a deal then, so we're adjourned until noon on Tuesday, March 25.

I'd like to thank everybody for coming and for your thoughts and so on. We'll get this information about the computers to you in the meantime. This meeting will have the Fleming report as its main agenda item.

[The committee adjourned at 2:55 p.m.]