

2:09 p.m.

Tuesday, October 13, 1992

[Chairman: Mr. Gogo]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would the committee come to order, please. We're looking at about two hours, but we'll have to play that by ear. We'll go as long as members think it's necessary.

First of all, could we deal with the proposed agenda that each of you have in front of you today? Do members agree with the agenda as proposed?

MR. EVANS: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Brian.

Frank, I thought that I asked the last time whether we required a seconder for motions in this committee. Do the rules of the House apply? We don't require a seconder?

MR. WORK: You don't. No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

All in favour of approval of the agenda?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Before we go to the minutes of our inaugural meeting under item 3 in your binders, because that's the first item we'll deal with, perhaps Louise or somebody would explain for the benefit of the committee the binder we have and how it's broken down.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: With pleasure, Mr. Chairman. In the first part of the binder with the tabs numbered from one to 10 both Corinne and Diane will insert the minutes of previous meetings so that they'll always be at the committee members' disposal. The back part of the binder with tabs will be summaries of reports and other information the committee may require during the life of the committee. For instance, the McMinn report and the McGrath report were mentioned at the last meeting by the committee members. We also have attached an interim report by the Saskatchewan Legislature, who are also undergoing a study of their rules, and also a copy of the motion establishing the committee. So the back of the binder will be information for committee members, and the first part will be the minutes and transcripts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Louise. Any questions on the binder? Now, it's proposed that at the conclusion of each meeting members would leave their binders - I think that's the agreement, isn't it, Louise? - and you or Corinne or Diane would see that they're brought up to date for the next meeting, and if we're traveling, they would be transported or we'd make some arrangement. If members wish to have copies of the documents that are in the binder, they could request any document and a copy could be made separate from the binder.

Okay, dealing with the minutes, then, under tab 3. As you can see, the meeting, although it lasted two hours, was pretty well all in camera, and I have the minutes of that in camera session. What it related to really was a very general discussion about the role of the committee. My intent was to have it in camera in order that members could express various thoughts, ideas, but particularly frustrations that they wouldn't have to read about the next day in the daily press. Members may want to comment on that.

There was nothing particularly embarrassing during that discussion. I just felt that it was imperative to have it in camera

for the reasons I stated; i.e., people could express various thoughts. The discussion ranged all the way from frustrations indicated by the Member for Grande Prairie with regard to not having any time in the estimates of the House to put forward constituents' views to suggestions by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar that we would set a shopping list, establish some priorities dealing with principles, various things like that. It wasn't in any way embarrassing.

Dealing with the minutes, however, that you have before you, could we have a motion to adopt?

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, I'll move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Bettie. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We had suggested at that time and prior to that that proposed topics for committee consideration be submitted by today's meeting. We have from the caucus of the New Democrats a document which we provided members with last time essentially called parliamentary reform. I recall the name of the document as Restoring Open and Fair Government. You have received just today from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, Bettie Hewes, Liberal Proposals for Parliamentary Reform. In addition, we'd received from Brian Evans correspondence to the effect that although the shopping list route was a desirable route to go - i.e., looking at the various areas to be looked at - fundamental to the role of the committee was to deal with principles; i.e., what should essentially be the role of the committee in dealing with matters of parliamentary democracy? Before we pursue the proposed topics, Brian, do you want to speak to your memo?

MR. EVANS: Well, thanks, Mr. Chairman. I think it's quite self-explanatory. At the last meeting, as you'll recall, I thought that before we got into specifics and tried to prioritize issues that we would deal with, we should be talking in a general sense about some of the things that are most important to us as parliamentarians. I tried to articulate those in understandable English in the memo dated September 30, 1992, that I've circulated. That was intended just to be a starting point for a more specific discussion that we'd go on to today and try to prioritize the 10 or 12 or 15 issues that we thought we could get a handle on and hopefully improve within a reasonable time frame. That again, Mr. Chairman, is a question I think we have to readdress today given some of the circumstances that have occurred since our last meeting: what is, in effect, our time frame and how do we scope out the things that we're going to be dealing with?

MR. CHAIRMAN: As you know, we have in our binder a summary of what other people have done. It's not exhausted by any means; there's a tremendous amount of material there. In addition, certainly government members will recall, the government caucus dealt with a fair number of topical issues following the Premier's announcement that there would be legislative reform. I think it was a year ago this month. In addition we have, as you know, the New Democratic proposals plus those received today from Bettie Hewes.

I think it would be extremely helpful if we could round out the kind of principles we're talking about, because on the one hand if you recall Halvar Jonson, the vice-chairman, saying that if we don't set a list of priorities and matters we're going to deal with, we could be here forevermore. Yet that doesn't detract for one

moment the whole question of what principles we should encompass in dealing with this review or reform.

Let's have a general discussion on that very point that Brian has raised. You know, what principles would members like to see? To be fair, to be open, and to be honest are nice terms, but what do we really mean? Do we really mean that Alberta should be in concert with parliamentary democracy worldwide? Should we be in concert with what's going on in the House of Commons? I don't think we can afford the chance to look at this in a very narrow point of view as to just what are our electorate thinks; i.e., only Alberta. I think it has to be wider than that. For example, suggestions have been made about access to information, the Bill that the government has talked about – it was in the throne speech – for later this fall if the House sits. Conversely, as I recall, Bob, the New Democrats proposed that any reform should include things like whistle blower protection, which is a fundamental principle to many people – I suppose there are many who would disagree with that too; that would be one reason that we don't have it today – and all the way to dealing with the whole question of how a person is elected; i.e., disclosure of financial contributions in the electoral process. So I can see it being very wide ranging.

I had suggested at the last meeting – as a matter of fact, Kurt made the motion – that we would have today a preliminary list of various items that we could discuss, and we'll come to those, I guess, in a moment. Are there any members' views on this whole question of some fundamental principles that we should be dealing with? Derek.

2:19

MR. FOX: I think the purpose of our deliberations is to make what we do relevant to Albertans, to make sure that the process is understandable and available and accountable to the people that we work for. So much of what we do here in terms of the process is removed from the everyday lives of people and doesn't really matter much to them, but the decisions that are the ultimate result of the process here are very important to people. I think we all agree, and I've seen it in everything that people have written, that we've got a long way to go to restore the faith of Albertans in our democratic institutions and in the people that are elected to serve. So whatever we do has to be relevant to them.

I think we need input from other Legislatures. We don't have to reinvent the wheel at every stage. There may be some changes to the process that have been made elsewhere that we can learn from that are instructive. The litmus test in every case should be, in my view, whether or not the changes we're proposing give Albertans the opportunity to be involved in the process, because they want to be involved, they want to feel that their opinions are important and that they're respected, and does it reflect the desire of Albertans to know, to have information, to have some insight into what's going on here in the decision-making process so that they're in a better position to judge whether or not we're doing a good job. So I think whatever we do, we need to measure it against those kinds of standards, and I guess there are ways we can group the things that we discuss. Maybe the obvious first grouping would be the things that deal with the legislative process. What changes do we want to recommend and analyze to open up the process in that Chamber so that the rules do respect tradition but are understandable to people and relevant to people and reflect their right to be involved and their right to know? Then there are other groupings we can deal with beyond that, but I think that's an obvious sort of starting point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Derek.

Before we hear from Bettie Hewes, I draw your attention again to the motion passed by the House in your binder under the tab "Motion":

... to consider the current functioning status of the Assembly and review ways of making it more responsive to the needs and values of the citizens of Alberta and ...

That's the first point you made, Derek. The word "and" is there, and I think it's extremely important.

... elected Members within the context of our parliamentary system and traditions.

I think that's critically important. It's one thing to deal with the concerns and perceived concerns of the citizens of Alberta, but it's very important as well that the people who are expected to put it in place; i.e., the members – that's an integral part of that whole paragraph.

Bettie.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to thank Brian for putting these principles together given the considerable family and domestic constraints that you must have been facing. I think they're a good starting place. I just felt that there were a few thoughts missing out of them. Like you, sir, I felt that we needed a checklist against which to test things as we move on through our discussions. I wonder if I could ask Brian – the chairman referred to some of the words as perhaps being difficult to attach real meaning to, but I still think we need the words in: ideas about access, fairness of access, equity of access, accountable, responsive. That's in the original motion, "responsive to." You have "meaningful" and "relevant," but we don't have responsive. The fairness, equitable, and accountable I think come together.

Mr. Chairman, the other word that has become a bit of a buzzword these days is "advocacy." One of my concerns is that there are those in our society who cannot deal with government because they cannot cope in terms that they're expected to. We have talked from time to time about having advocates for, say, the PUB or whatever. I think we have to begin to think – and I'm not sure how I would express this; I'm struggling with words here – not just about being accessible and being responsive but something in the sense of reaching out and helping those who cannot get to government or make their thoughts known.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman and Bettie, certainly I agree that access is extremely important. I thought I covered that in the aspect of being understandable first of all and therefore meaningful. I saw those two naturally implying that there would be greater access to the public. I agree as well that advocacy is an important part of this, and that comes into the picture when you're talking about a caring process, a process that is not rigid, that doesn't merely adhere to Standing Orders because Standing Orders are in black and white, but rather is cognizant of the changes that occur in society and that therefore can adapt to those changes.

Bettie, I certainly don't want to hold out that I think this list is mutually exclusive of all the issues that we would be dealing with in terms of principles. I'm taking words here and trying to broaden out concepts with one word, and that's a difficult process. I think if we're missing some things in here, then we should be talking about them specifically. Maybe caring isn't enough. Maybe you'd say that we want to be caring so that we can be better advocates for society. Maybe you want to expand on it that way.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, perhaps "advocacy" is a bit more aggressive word. I think that's what I was struggling with. But I would like to see some of those thoughts fleshed out in these five principles that he's enunciated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I guess it goes without saying that the role of government, whether it applies to our Parliament, is: governments must govern for all, not only the majority. So I think tradition tells us that government must represent those minorities who do not have spokespeople. One of the reasons, if not the primary reason, that 1972 saw the passage of both the Alberta Bill of Rights and the IRPA was that they had rights. They subsequently in many ways, I guess, tend to have been dwarfed by the Charter of Rights and the 1982 Constitution.

2:29

Comments on Brian's memo with regard to principles? I certainly find no quarrel at all with the fact that we must respect tradition but must also be open to change. The rules must be understandable and must be understandable to all, i.e. Dennis Anderson's plain language Act. It must be "meaningful and therefore relevant." I have no difficulty with any of these terms. "Efficient" is a word that's foreign to government by definition so that's probably a good word, Brian. "In terms of time": time is a friend of parliamentarians; they sit forever. And ultimately, of course, "caring since it exists to promote and reflect societal values": I mean, that's very well put.

MR. FOX: I like what Brian's done there, and I think it's a good starting point. What struck me, though, when I read them is that there's not a definite statement there about the need for Albertans to be involved in the process, as I was saying earlier. I just tried writing something here as a sixth point that might fit into the framework that Brian's using:

Parliament and its processes must be available and accountable to Albertans. Their views should be sought, their views should be respected, and their views should be reflected in all the work we do. They need to be involved, and they have a right to know what's going on here.

Bob and I met for quite a while before this meeting just puzzling over some of these things, and we were both struck with how pervasive the distrust and anger is that Canadians and Albertans feel towards all of our democratic institutions and especially the elected people who are involved. We've got a long way to go to restore faith in what we're doing on behalf of people. We're parliamentarians and we're part of a parliamentary committee, and it's very easy for us to be absorbed in what we're doing and to think it's relevant. But we have to try to – I don't know – break out of the confines here and make sure that whatever we're doing, we're seeking the input of Albertans and showing them that their input counts for something, that their views are important, and that they're going to be reflected in what we're doing.

So I would make that suggestion as an additional principle that would perhaps guide the committee and suggest from that, Mr. Chairman, that we ensure that we seek input from Albertans as part of the work of this committee. That's not to say that we should have hearings in every community and travel out there – maybe that's too onerous an agenda – but certainly let people know what we're doing and why and seek input. I know that there are a lot of people in the province who spend a great deal of time thinking and analyzing the system and trying to come up with relevant ideas to make it better. I think we need to hear from those people and in our deliberations consider what they have to say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Derek, would you word that again as principle 6?

MR. FOX: It's a little wordy. Brian's so concise in his. Living closer to mountains, he's used to commandments on tablets. I tend to use a little more paper.

MR. EVANS: Yours is a call to action; it must be a little bit lengthy, Derek, in fairness.

MR. FOX: It could be pared down. "Parliament and its process must be available and accountable to Albertans." I believe that's simpler.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Available and accountable?

MR. FOX: Yeah. "To Albertans." "Their views should be sought, respected, and reflected in all the work we do."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's down to earth by using the term "work" as opposed to deliberations. Thanks, Derek.

I want to welcome to the committee the vice-chairman, the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey, Halvar Jonson. Halvar, we're just discussing Brian's suggestion and recommendations that we have for the record, the set of principles to work by dated September 30, and we just added to it, as you heard from Derek Fox. That's where we're at now.

It would seem to me, members of the committee, that I would find great comfort if we had a defined set of principles that we would work to. Kurt Gesell made this point last time. It's like a track we would run on, and if we end up with a shopping list of 10 or 20 or 30 or 40 items, we could very quickly draw ourselves back to: is it running on the track of the guiding principles? I like it from that point of view. To me it's very comforting that we would have a track to run on. Brian, I'm grateful for that.

Bob.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, as you say, we could get into lots of topics and be here for a long time; I think we could get into philosophy and be here for a long time as well. But I guess in terms of establishing a tenor and maybe some assumptions to begin with, it's important to have this kind of a discussion.

I think for me the question that we need to answer is whether we see the Legislature as being a decision-making body or not or whether it's some other kind of a body, because depending on sort of how you see it, you'll structure it differently. I don't see the Legislature as being a decision-making body at all. I think the crucial decisions that are made are made elsewhere – in a caucus, in a cabinet, in a minister's office – and the Legislature serves presumably to be some kind of accountability body for the government, which means that there's always a danger that if the system isn't properly structured, it ends up being nothing more than a rubber stamp for decisions that are taken elsewhere.

So in my view, asked as part of parliamentary reform is: how do we either make the Legislature more effective in creating accountability or how do we give the Legislature more genuine and real decision-making authority? I think those are sort of the two directions that reform should be taking us, either one or the other or both simultaneously.

My thought in terms of the public: because the decisions aren't being made in the Legislature, they feel even more remote from their democratic institutions and increasingly see us as being irrelevant to their ordinary concerns. I don't think it's just a problem facing us in Alberta or in Canada. I think it's generally a problem throughout the western democracies, where people are seeing their political elites as becoming more and more remote and farther and farther away from influence by the ordinary citizen.

So in conjunction with how do we make it more of a decision-making body and more of an accountability body, I think we also have to figure out: what are the mechanisms to bring the concerns or even the preoccupations of ordinary people into the Assembly? How do we ensure that the concerns of the ordinary person somehow get addressed inside the Assembly as opposed to, you know, our agendas seeming to be determined by government who have certain agendas that they want to adopt over the course of a legislative session?

I'd also like to know as terms of a principle: how do we strengthen the role of the ordinary member so that maybe more time can be set aside for the ordinary member in the Assembly to be bringing forward what they see as being some of the preoccupations of the public as a whole?

So there are sort of three areas that in some ways are touched on in the memo that Brian circulated, but I think also we should be very clear about where we see the role of parliament: what it is now and where we'd like to see it go.

2:39

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, for a moment I thought you were trying to erase Magna Carta from history, Bob. You know, it's no secret that he who controls government, controls Parliament, controls a Legislature. That's as old as since King John stepped aside. I'm not here to argue; don't get me wrong. I'm saying let's be cognizant of the realities. You mentioned that the Legislature does not make decisions. The last time I looked, the Crown presented budgets to the House and the House made decisions.

Let's come back to you on it, Bob.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Yeah, I'd like to pick up on that. Just as an example, even when Mrs. Thatcher had a 100-seat majority in Westminster, a number of Bills failed in the House of Commons because her own members of her Conservative Party decided they couldn't support the measures her government was proposing and they joined with the opposition to defeat them. So at least in Westminster I think there's a far more vigorous decision-making role than we find in our own Legislatures in this country, where the dictates of caucus solidarity seem to have gone to an extent that you don't find in Westminster. So that's what I'm saying: if we look at sort of the way our system has evolved in Canada, it's moved away from what I see some of the original roles of Westminster being.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, then, I misinterpreted you. Each party has made those suggestions that are called free votes. Bettie Hewes has made them, you've made them, and I think the government caucus has made them under the name "free votes." Oh, no. I'm with you on that context though.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I appreciate you picking up on that so I could clarify my point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bob Elliott.

DR. ELLIOTT: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to those members who have been speaking on some of these points. In listening to this last speaker, I have some thoughts in talking about principles and deciding or determining and making sure that we understand the role of Parliament and as we talk about what we think we'd like to see as changes or focus on, we make sure that we don't, as the previous speaker said, just be a rubber stamp, or the flip side of that, I suppose, is to shackle it so it's totally useless if we

become so entangled with some of the things that we have talked about.

I find the public is not all that sure itself of what it expects from parliament. I've taken issues out to my constituency and said, "Well, yesterday we did this." The reaction was, "Well, you didn't ask me." So I was caught. The next time I said: "Well, look, tomorrow we're going to be talking about this. What's your opinion?" The reaction was: "Stop being a fence sitter. Go do it. That's what we hired you for." They can't have it both ways, and as an elected member I bring that piece of confusion to this table as we talk about these things.

Are we going to rubber-stamp? Are we going to shackle it so it's useless? Are we going to consult the people? Are we going to show leadership? Are we going to be representatives? Those are some of the areas within which I find I have to keep my thinking as we talk about these things. Once it gets either too far one way or the other, on the rubber stamp or the shackle, we have to find a way to proceed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess our Parliamentary Counsel would tell us that we have in Standing Orders the ability to present petitions to the House on condition they don't impose a tax on the people. I think that's the wording; i.e., what in hell can you do that doesn't impose?

Any other comments on the recommended principles that we should be dealing with? Halvar, you joined us just a little bit late, but I think you've caught on to what we've been discussing here.

Reference has been made already to the principles and the shopping list that we'll probably come to; i.e., recommended areas to deal with. Two items before we deal with that. One touches a little bit - and I made reference to this last time - on what Derek Fox has mentioned, and that is that the reputation of the politician or the way the politician has appeared to fall into disrepute among electors is an area that needs some very, very close looking at. I mentioned last time that we're situated here, the capital city of the province, 800,000 or more people in the catch basin of Edmonton, 200 and some-odd seats in the gallery, and how often have you looked at the gallery and found it empty. Surely there's a message there. Who do we rely on to inform the public? Who do we rely on to attract people to watch lawmakers in action in the highest court in the province? Without question media play a very significant role, yet for the past couple years, it seems to me, it's been one almost of confrontation, if not total confrontation. It seems to me anyway.

So one of the suggestions I'm going to make fairly shortly is that one of the first steps we take, if we're interested in hearing what others think, is perhaps a meeting with media. We have a 20- or 22-member press gallery, if that's the appropriate term, here in the House. I think Richard Helm is the new president; Don Wanagas has gone to Cyprus. It just seems to me that one of the first things we should be doing is talking to whoever is in the business of communication. If we're not in the business of communication, for heaven's sake, let's talk to the people who are. That was one of the items I particularly wanted to raise today.

Looking at our agenda, because I'm now coming to item 4, I really inserted an item there that I want us to deal with, and that's the whole question of proposed topics. You have in your manual, members of the committee: the McGrath committee, Saskatchewan, which is going through our procedure now; the McMinn report - I'm not familiar with that, by the way; I've not read it - on the Assembly of B.C.; and the document Standing Orders of the House of Commons. Before we get on to the shopping list - and we have, I think, a tremendous number of items - I really think we should be requesting the Clerk, Dr.

McNeil, to pursue various avenues in addition to what's been pursued here. These, the ones in your binder, were raised at previous times.

Let's just take a moment or two to see if there's direction from the committee to the Clerk of the House to pursue any other areas. He can do that either on his own initiative or by direction of the Table. It would seem to me that Dr. McNeil, as you recall last time, said he was prepared to do a variety of things. I want to take this opportunity to ensure there were no items he should be pursuing that members wanted him to pursue that he's not aware of. Are there any other specific areas you feel he should be looking at; i.e., should he be looking at Westminster? Should he be looking at - I don't want to get into a whole set of questions, but as you know, Australia, New Zealand do various things in terms of parliamentary reform and that kind of thing.

Let's just take a minute to see if there are other areas, because I want to end up giving direction to the Clerk to pursue whatever other areas they should be pursuing.

Bob.

2:49

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Is there not currently a federal House committee on electoral financing, electoral reform? I forget the exact title of it, but that's a whole area that, as you know, you've heard me on a number of occasions raise as an issue and one that I like to keep a watching brief on just to see what they're doing federally. That would be one committee I'd like in particular to highlight to ensure we're in contact with them and maybe receiving their reports and recommendations that are going forward to the House of Commons.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody familiar with what Bob's raised? Louise or Frank?

MR. WORK: Mr. Chairman, there is . . .

MR. FOX: The Lortie commission.

MR. WORK: Yeah, or there is a report that we were just given on the jurist consult in Ottawa, which would be roughly equivalent to our Ethics Commissioner. That's not the one?

MR. FOX: There was a long parliamentary committee process or a royal commission or whatever, the Pierre Lortie commission. They were examining election finances, contributions, voter enumeration, and a lot of those things are pending before the House. I think that's what you . . .

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, that committee has completed, have they not? As far as I know, they have.

MR. FOX: They completed their work, but it has not been implemented.

MRS. HEWES: We should have that report.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can you chase that down, Frank?

MR. WORK: Yes; absolutely.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other specific suggestions? Derek.

MR. FOX: Can I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that we just pursue a little bit more something you raised earlier before getting too far

into this. We've talked about principles that should guide our deliberations and considerations but trying to come up with a more focused definition of what issues we might deal with. I mentioned earlier that a lot of the proposals we've made and other members of the committee made deal specifically with legislative procedure, and I think that's what you're alluding to now. But if we can come up with some other categories within which we can group these suggestions, then we've got areas to work in. It seems to me that reform of the Legislature is the obvious first place. Perhaps a range of suggestions dealing with finances, with the books of government, and the process of budgeting and handling money. Another category that you alluded to would be the conduct of elected members and conflict of interest. Things like that would fit into that category.

Another one that Bob has raised, which is certainly very topical and interesting, is the process of election. You know, elections, finances, contributions, disclosure, enumeration, voter involvement.

So I guess to me, I see five different categories within which we could group suggestions, the obvious first one being legislative procedures, and we can seek input from other jurisdictions. I'm just wondering how you and other members of the committee feel about these other groupings in terms of trying to focus our discussions as a committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, certainly, back to other resolutions and elected members - I mean, one addresses very clearly what to me might be termed the working conditions of a member; i.e., what influence would they have in the legislative body they were elected to represent? As I mentioned last time, the estimates are 25 days, as long as the House of Commons. Yet we heard from a member previously that he's been a member of the House 10 years and can't get a word in in estimates, so how does he represent his constituents? Well, that's an internal matter of what I would call a working condition. That's being accountable to his or her constituents. How can they be accountable if they can't get on their feet unless they want to run for the opposition party and get elected? I mean, that's nonsense.

MRS. HEWES: That's okay. I'll let them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, sure, it's okay, but you hear what I'm saying.

MR. FOX: We won't. We're fussy.

MRS. HEWES: Well, I don't want them in my party, Derek. They're going to be the opposition; that's the idea.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Without question our bible for years has been *Beauchesne*. It's been quoted ad nauseam. Yet in fairness Standing Orders are the working guidelines of this Assembly and the working guidelines of any other Assembly or Parliament, and they have to get, I think, a very high degree of priority because we must serve the members of the House. More realistically, we must make recommendations which are going to be accepted by the members of the House. I think that is very important.

As to how we would group them, I just want to speak for a moment on this, Bettie. I had made the suggestion last time, some of you may recall, that we would have Corinne or Diane or somebody with this chalkboard - that's not nearly big enough - where we would list all the items members would like to see reviewed. We could then take some time and say, "Well, I think that fits in that category and that category and that category"; i.e., the grouping that Derek Fox has spoken to.

In the final analysis, we've got to recognize that we must set priorities that are in accordance with the principles that Brian Evans has suggested within a working time frame; i.e., we don't have tenure. We're not here to retire, hopefully. We would like to have a working document that we could convince the Legislature to adopt. So we have to prioritize. There undoubtedly would be better ways than what I suggested last time. If we said that we would approach it from the point of view of must do, should do, and could do in terms of priority, if we had 50 items on the wall and we say that we can realistically deal with 10 meaningful items, even though there are 50, then each member would have 10 votes and we would go through item by item. That way we would prioritize. I think we'd end up with a working document that we could address ourselves to, and I think that would be a reasonable approach. There may be better suggestions as to how to approach it.

Depending on the feelings of the members, is the first priority to get some public acceptance and respect for the people who make the decisions, i.e. the politician? The politician, when I look at it, is a reflection of the electorate. I mean, something has to be done there to win back that respect. Communication, I think, is critically important, and then – and we shouldn't put this at the bottom of the list – the people, the men and women who are expected to implement and represent the constituents in the Assembly. So this list could be very, very long, and we'd probably have to group them in some form, as I see it. That's my observation.

I want to come back in a moment to the media, because I view that as critical. Frankly, one of the first meetings that could take place, in my view as a legislator, is with the media, the people who either by ethics or their display ads are committed to communicating with the public. I think that's critically important. I mentioned Richard Helm because I understand that he's the new president of the press gallery. I'd like us to take some time later in this meeting to make a decision: do we or don't we meet with that group? That could be one of the first meetings we have. That's very high, as I perceive it, on our priority list.

I want to come to the shopping list. I apologize for using that term. Priority list might be a better term. Then we want to deal with matters of travel and budget, hopefully today. I'm mindful of the hour or two left.

Derek.

2:59

MR. FOX: Mr. Chairman, I guess for my own sake I'm wondering how broadly we interpret the mandate of the Assembly, the motion here. Does it include consideration of how elections are conducted, how money is raised and accounted for in our effort to restore faith in the process and encourage and involvement of people? I think it should, and I believe Bob put that on the agenda, but if it's the decision of the committee that that, for example, is too broad an interpretation of the mandate from the Assembly, then we won't be thinking about that anymore in the context of this committee.

Some of the proposals we made in our document Restoring Open and Fair Government dealt with the way government does business: contracting, tendering, appointments to boards and commissions, et cetera. You know, I think we can agree that they are important, and I'd like to argue for them being part of our mandate. But if the committee feels that that is too broad an interpretation of the mandate from the Assembly, then in my own mind I won't be dealing with those issues here; I'll find other ways of advancing that agenda. So I'm just looking for some

guidance from the committee in terms of what it is specifically that we're dealing with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, at first blush my reaction would be that the workings of the Assembly relating to the electorate would rate much higher than how you arrive at the Assembly. I'm trying to look at what is achievable, knowing full well that there are political organizations out there that would probably view it as their own bailiwick. As you know, the Conservatives are going through a leadership process now, the first ever in this province, a dramatic change. How it will work out I have no idea. [Not recorded]

Bettie.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, two or three things. I think I'm in general agreement with your last comments, but I think it would be important for us, even if we do determine that the mandate is related to, as the Chairman points out, other issues that impinge, that they have to have some attention from the committee, if only to have the secondary list presented, and these in addition need to be dealt with.

Mr. Chairman, all I've tried to do here in my priority list – I've given you two lists. One is Standing Orders revisions, and the other is revisions that I believe are important but would require legislative change. That's a very simple, elementary kind of division. I would like to hear Derek's other groupings, and then I suggest that perhaps as a first exercise we just rip through these and, say, give them a one, two, or three or wherever they belong. It seems to me that some of them, at least as I've reviewed my own, are relatively mechanical; others require quite a change in thinking. Perhaps if we could have Derek's categories put up for us, we might have some discussion on that. I think it would be helpful if we could categorize some of the list that the New Democrats have given us as well as ours.

I haven't heard. Are there additional items members want to add, or is this the list? Are we at it now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You recall at the last meeting, Bettie – as a matter of fact, you're the one that raised it – that the list would be neither exhaustive, inclusive, nor time final and that members in this committee would decide the priority of any suggestions members brought forward. So although we would have essentially a list from which to work and we'd prioritize that, members could at any time bring forward suggestions. I think it was you that put that case for consideration.

To date, I know Kurt Gesell and Bob Elliott were working on some items. I haven't seen them; I don't know where they are. They may be in the same process as yours, where I didn't have them prior to today. I would very much like to have received them as of today so we could consider them today in the tentative planning of our list. Today being Tuesday, could I prevail upon the committee who had suggestions for consideration to have them in by this Friday, at least in some form. Now, you've had the opportunity – not of Bettie's list, although that was a Liberal position paper from last year, I think, and members may be familiar with that. Most of your study deals with Standing Orders. But we've had the New Democrats' list for some time. Now, maybe members think that's all-inclusive. I mean, there are some items in there that certainly are going to generate a lot of discussion. Some of them are passé because we've already taken them. We may not have proclaimed the conflict of interest, but it is legislation – i.e., referring to your comment about the Chief Justice and so on.

Could I prevail upon members, this being Tuesday, to have something in my hands on Friday so that by the next meeting we will be in a position to formalize the list of items we're going to deal with. Is there any disagreement by government members of the committee? The opposition, I think, have done a good job in terms of giving us suggestions. Okay, having said that . . .

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Just one request, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciated getting this in advance and reading the memo from Brian Evans. If the lists, anything that is submitted, could be faxed out to us in our constituency offices when they're received or early next week, that sort of advance notice I very much appreciate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, perhaps with your permission. The first sort of category grouping would be the ones that affect the Legislature and its operation now. The other ones deal with how you get there. Maybe if we can group them that way, that's our first rough run at it. Then within the ones that affect the Legislature, there are several categories that you mentioned that could serve as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's a good point, Bettie, because item 1, submitted by Derek and Bob, is item 2 suggested by you. For example, the election of Speaker is fundamental to the whole process. The larger question would be: what category would it come under? If we were to follow the suggestion by Derek, we would have perhaps five categories, four categories, six categories, and so on. I think it's a little premature to allocate a weighting to any of these. But are you suggesting now that perhaps we look at page 2 of Derek's memo of suggestions and quickly go through them? Is that what you're suggesting?

MRS. HEWES: Well, I thought we could take a rough cut at it, Mr. Chairman. Derek had the other grouping that deals with how we get elected, election financing and so on. Some of these would fall immediately into that category, and others would fall into Standing Orders or legislative change. Just a suggestion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think there's general agreement there that the larger question, how one arrives here, is for another day or for later consideration as opposed to – which was really Bob's point because it touches on the financing and so on. But dealing with the workings of members – i.e., the Legislature – would more closely address the list, I think, that Derek and Bob have supplied to us.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I could argue for my point, if that's appropriate. I don't want to lose that item at the moment. You had asked us to put our proposals forward. I don't want to direct our energies off on that one topic at the moment, but particularly given the leadership, I think it highlights perhaps some of those larger concerns and it's relevant and pertinent. But I don't want to get into a debate on that topic at the moment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that topic was a high priority of Bob Rae until last year, and now I think it's shifted. So once you achieve government . . .

3:09

MR. FOX: Ask us that in a year or so.

Well, you know, from my point of view, I'm prepared to look at things from that perspective. What are the decisions we make here? What is the work we do here? Then examine other things in good time. That's my opinion. One thing Bob made sure was part of our agenda here was that we not just deal with the making of laws but deal with the handling of money. I think that's part of Bettie's list too, that there are decisions with respect to budget estimates, with respect to updates and the work of the Auditor General, and the kind of information we receive and share here is all part of the legislative process. So there's stuff related to the making of laws and stuff related to the handling of money. Maybe those two categories with some focus on the credibility of each and every one of us as elected members may be another category.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, dealing with that point, Derek, let's say we're going to talk about authority to spend money or publication of public accounts or the role of the Auditor General, those kinds of things. Do we take it as a given that once the committee decides we should pursue that, we automatically then trigger the Clerk or the research people to look at all jurisdictions in Canada to see where we rate vis-à-vis them? I don't think that's a bad idea, but it is a major job. Or do we deal in isolation with our own Assembly? I think that's worthy of discussion. You know, election of the Speaker is relatively easy in terms of what jurisdiction does what, but when we get into roles of the Auditor General, public accounts – let's just take a minute and think about that before we proceed. We'll have a five-minute break, I think mainly because the chairman needs a washroom, but hopefully others will need it.

[The committee adjourned from 3:11 p.m. to 3:17 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's go back to where we were. There were two people on the list to speak – one was Bettie and one Brian – and then Bob Hawkesworth.

MRS. HEWES: I'm finished, sir, for the time being.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, just at adjournment the comment was made that before we worry about how far we should go in getting some background information, we have to identify the issues we will prioritize. I think that will identify for us rather readily whether we have to look at all the jurisdictions in Canada or we can just go on our own experience here in Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bob Hawkesworth.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Yes. I think your point is certainly a valid one, Mr. Chairman, when it comes to investigating what other jurisdictions are doing in the case of finance, budget, auditing, and that sort of thing. I do know that public accounts committees and auditors general have regular meetings across the country, and I suspect a lot of the information we would want to seek to guide us is stuff that could easily be taken off the shelf. It's probably readily available.

Coming back to the Magna Carta, it was money and the king's right to tax and the barons' resistance to taxation without some say in how it was spent that prompted the Magna Carta, so a lot of our democratic reforms over the years have been focused around the raising of and accounting for money. I suspect this is an area that really should be of some priority for the committee, because I think it's a matter of real public concern about the whole legislative process.



MR. CHAIRMAN: The one area I'm obviously trying to avoid is setting up in any firm way the areas we should look into, because in my view we haven't received all the suggestions we certainly should have. For example, just for information I made a list of things that I, not as chairman but as a member, felt we should look into. Let me quickly go through them. You'll find there are similarities.

Media access: I feel strongly about that. I don't know what they do in other jurisdictions, but I sense in many ways a kind of stone wall built around, and for the life of me, I have great difficulty with that. I'm not being critical of anybody here in the Assembly. If 70 percent of people's views are influenced by what they see and what they hear, then we should be doing everything to accommodate that. Election of Speaker: we've talked about that. Voting procedures. The question period format. Committee structure. Then within the Leg. structure itself I had things like sitting hours, members' statements, length of debate, Standing Orders, how you move Bills through. I know many of you are very familiar with these things, wanting to look at them.

I'm not advocating the American system of calendar dates for opening and closing and having elections, but maybe there's some merit in fixed dates. It ties the hands and puts the onus on the government as opposed to the Assembly. I mentioned last time that we send people, parliamentary delegations, off around the world as members of CPA, both Canadian and Commonwealth; I've yet to read a report. It seems to me it's not unreasonable to have a report to find out what the hell I'm paying for. I don't think that's unrealistic. I don't know how you people feel. Then the access to information generally. As a member of cabinet, obviously you can appreciate my role is somewhat different from other members', because I take an oath that certain things cannot be disclosed for 30 years and so on. That does not take away from access to information in principle, and the government's committed itself to an Act. The Attorney General, Mr. Rostad, is working on that now.

I then go back to two things. One, have areas submitted to me as chairman by Friday of this week. I will then endeavour to compile a list. The author's name would go behind each item, and then we could determine at the next meeting whose name will be associated with an item if three people suggest the same one. We could have it done that way.

Brian.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, some of the points that I think are important have been mentioned both by the Liberal member and by the ND members. Do you want us to restate those, or do you want us to just add to those two lists that have been submitted?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like them restated. Then we would marry them all up, if the word "marry" is still in fashion.

MR. FOX: We could check them all out together.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Two other items – really three, because I want to come back to the whole question of media. If you think I'm dwelling too much on that, say so, because I was going to make a suggestion that at the next meeting it may be very important for us to consider having this committee meet with media as a group. Let them share with us what they think is missing – this goes back to Derek's point – and let us be able to share with them perhaps the role we think they could play, that kind of interaction. That would be the first formal meeting of this committee with a group. This is only a suggestion that I put on the table.

The other two items we want to deal with today are one of travel and one of budget. Now, you recognize that government members are probably involved in a process that's going to culminate on December 5 and their schedules could be pretty awkward because of candidates – I don't know. We should decide what meetings we could have between now and year-end and what travel we would contemplate in the new year. We have about five months left in the 1992-93 budget year, so we rely on Louise, following our direction, to draft a budget. We should have a little bit of discussion on that.

Could we put on the table – we had suggested meeting today from 2 to 4, so I don't want to hold you beyond that – the suggestion of meeting with perhaps Mr. Helm and members of the press gallery at our next meeting? Any thoughts?

DR. ELLIOTT: I would agree. Would you like a motion for guidance to the Chair to set that up, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I guess if we have a motion, then we can discuss it. There's a great tendency here – I ask your indulgence – between being formal and being informal. As I expressed the last time, we're all in this together. We're a group that's going to end up with a report going to the Assembly, hopefully to endorse what we propose. So on the one hand I want us to be very informal, and yet I guess we should comply with *Robert's Rules* at some point and have a motion moved in order to discuss it.

DR. ELLIOTT: Well, I'll make a motion that we support your suggestion and we ask you to set it up for the next meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Discussion? Derek.

3:27

MR. FOX: Well, I think that would be very useful, but I think we should be clear in terms of our invitation in what we're hoping to get from them in terms of input. They do have a lot of insight into the process here, and if, for example, we want to specifically ask them for their views on how parliamentary procedure, development of legislation, and budgets should be handled, then we ask that to be on their agenda. In addition, are there changes that could be made or that they would recommend with respect to the communication agenda that you referred to earlier?

One suggestion that our caucus made during session, when things were at a particularly tense level between some members of the Assembly and the press gallery, was that we set up a joint committee that involved representatives from each party and representatives of the parliamentary press gallery, not a parliamentary committee but a joint committee, that would act as a liaison between elected members and members of the gallery, because they're one group of Albertans that has no recourse or avenue of appeal if they feel their rights are not being respected or their ability to do their work is not being considered. That's certainly something I'd want to ask them about so that we'd have a vehicle established that could address, on the one hand, concerns that the media have about access, about the way they do their job here and, on the other hand, a vehicle through which members could address concerns they have about, you know, for example, people coming to their home on a Sunday morning to interview them on a contentious issue. Maybe there are different concerns that legislators and media people would bring to a joint body like that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bonnie.



MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree with much of what Derek has said, but I wonder if it shouldn't be our second meeting and we use the next one to kind of formulate where we're going and get that firmed up a bit. Then I think we'd have a better idea of what the agenda would be for the meeting with the media.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My thought with regard to the media – and I'd be asking the Clerk to provide information on this – would be access by the media to members and the Assembly, mainly on access as opposed to not sitting in judgment: "Do you think this government is doing a good job? Do you think the Assembly is being open? Do you think this; do you think that?" I think that might flow, but almost the primary one would be the whole question of access of the media, that we believe it's critically important to us as legislators to have the communication. I mean, surely you must be with me, as members of the Assembly, when you find on Tuesdays and Thursdays after question period that there's not a member of the gallery to be found. I find that extremely disheartening for members of the Assembly, because that's the only time members of the House can propose Bills and motions on behalf of constituents. So I'll be very frank: I'm very disappointed with the media, with that fourth estate, that exists for whatever reason.

Bettie.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, I think that's a good idea if we can meet with them. It would be great if we could get a little farther in our own thinking today, perhaps, but I think we should do it quickly.

I see three things. First of all, I think we should ask them to comment on our relationship between the Legislative Assembly and the media, and that is all of the things that you've mentioned, sir. I think we should ask them if they have any particular comments about the legislative processes that we now endure. They're watchers. They must see some of the flaws – flaws perhaps is too strong a term – in the process, and I would appreciate their opinion on that. The third one is any comments they have about our relationship through them with the general public.

I did a paper, Mr. Chairman, on the private lives of public people for the St. John's parliamentary conference that I was at, and I'll circulate that to the board. It was interesting to write it – more interesting writing it, I'm sure, than reading it. These are the kinds of things that we would hope to hear from the media, where we can improve that relationship through them to the public. So I would see three things we could ask them to comment on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it would be my intent, if this motion were carried, to write to the president of the press gallery inviting them to a meeting of this committee with a proposed agenda of items for discussion along the lines that you're suggesting. I would view it as extremely helpful initially for this committee to go back to the first item that was mentioned here today, and that is that politicians are viewed by the public in a certain context, certainly not a positive context. In many ways I think they're viewed through the eyes of the media. I'm not criticizing the media. You know, they are reporting facts, I suppose.

Bob.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you. I certainly appreciate the importance you're giving to the media; I think that's understandable. I concur that they certainly are a group of people we have a very significant relationship with, and certainly virtually

everything that we do in this place is communicated to the public through the media. So it's a crucial relationship, and I think your point is well taken that we need to ensure that the long-term relationship with the media is a workable one.

I'd just like to pick up on what Bonnie Laing has said. At this point I feel that we're in sort of the very preliminary organizational stages of the committee. If you feel that it's important to bring the media to our next meeting, I won't oppose that, but I'm wondering if we're far enough into the process in our own thinking to make such a meeting as effective as it could be. Perhaps if we waited one meeting more, it might be a little more useful meeting.

I think where we're at right now, as I see it, is that we've established without motion but by some consensus a framework of some principles. Derek made a suggestion on top of the ones from Brian, and that's helpful in laying a foundation. I think the next step is to sort of set up some categories into which we could put all these different issues so that we can at least understand the direction we'd like to go on issues under various categories. Once we finalize that process to that stage, I think we're then in a position where we can usefully put questions and communicate to people outside the committee where we're headed and what we want to accomplish or at least what areas we want to review, in which case the input back to us would most likely be the most helpful.

I know that Derek suggested a number of categories, and maybe I could, in the context of that, make some suggestions of my own. One is the whole area of Standing Orders and the legislative process that we go through that governs our business here and governs the role of committees. A second category is budget, finance, audit, and the business of government. A third category might be something called public accessibility and accountability, and I guess that includes how the public has direct and formal input into what goes on here as well as how we communicate to the public to ensure that the public is an informed public. Certainly if we're looking at a series of issues, the media would have a great deal of important things to say to us about that third category.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Bob.

The reason for my emphasis on media before we get into making a list of items was that they could perhaps during the discussion share with us what they perceive the public is not getting, that legislators could be doing. That might influence, then, our judgment in terms of prioritization of the issues rather than the other way around. That was my intent there.

If you recall last meeting, Kurt Gesell made reference to the whole question of strategic planning with regard to parliamentary reform, part of which has been accomplished now if we accept Brian's suggestion that the amendment by Derek is the principle side, which I'm very comfortable with. It just seemed to me that if we had that initial meeting early in the game with the one common denominator of the Assembly in addition to its membership – and that is the media – we could receive some very, very good suggestions, not necessarily by asking them but from their observations. I'd certainly encourage for our next meeting – and we're going to come to meeting dates here in a moment – that we have that meeting with the media.

Any other discussion on that? Kurt.

3:37

MR. GESELL: Just to reinforce your comments, Mr. Chairman. I find that if you involve people in the process and the media particularly, that's much more effective than providing them with a list that we're going to be dealing with. It sort of almost

excludes them from the process. So I'd prefer the motion as it stands right now: to have the meeting as early as possible so that they're generating some input as to categories and detailed lists that we're going to provide. They should maybe have the same opportunity, and we might even pick up on some of the things that they will suggest. Hopefully we will. Maybe that will add to our list, but maybe it will change some of the priorities, as you have mentioned, of the list that we've got. In accordance with the number 6 principle Derek has put forward, it's a very important one, that we have that rapport with the public. Who else to ask but the media about that role?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Kurt.

Are we in agreement, then, that the next meeting would be focused around meeting with the media, as proposed by Bob Elliott?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Thank you.

Looking at schedules for meetings, there's some work to do between now and then in compiling the lists of the topics. Rather than having the meeting at the call of the Chair, which is not a bad idea because I'm the Chair, I want to share with you my time commitments and so on. Derek and Bob, you weren't here, but last meeting we said that because you caucus on Thursday and because Bettie caucuses on Wednesday, we should choose Monday or Tuesday for meetings if at all possible. So I'm looking at a date of November 17, which is a Tuesday. The reason I raise that is that in discussion with colleagues who are involved in a process which culminates on December 5, they also have commitments, and so on. Within that context, if that's our next meeting, there's some work that has to be done. If you agree with that date for the meeting, we should then decide on a follow-up meeting or meetings in calendar year '92; i.e., what would we do as a result of the next meeting? If the next meeting takes two hours, four hours, or six hours, we may end up having it two hours with the media and two hours on other items and so on. I don't want to prejudice that.

Bob.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: That was my question, Mr. Chairman: whether you contemplated us maybe meeting with the media in the morning and then in the afternoon meeting again for part of the afternoon or whatever to maybe finalize our list of issues or at least categorize our issues into some kind of a working paper or something.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd be comfortable with that. I think it's a good suggestion, Bob.

Would members agree with that?

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, are we talking perhaps 10 to noon and then 2 to whenever?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. EVANS: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bob Elliott.

DR. ELLIOTT: Mr. Chairman, I have to serve notice that I'll not be able to be present on that date, but if I'm the only one, I have no problem with the committee meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, in that context, Bob, I was going to raise in a memo to you that if those who are not available to meet that day would care to provide the Chair with a list of items they want raised with the media, I would see to it that they were raised. So if you'd make note of that. It would be my hope that we would have time for at least another meeting or two meetings following November 17. The caveat I put in is this, members of the committee: if we prioritize a list of items on the 17th, and say that takes half our day to meet, and then we wish to discuss one, two, or three of those items within two weeks or whatever, we've got to give the Clerk and the research people time to have any document necessary that we need for discussing that item. I think that's important to remember. They just can't push a button and have an answer. Okay?

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, I hate to ask this, but can somebody take the shopping lists and find out where there are common and where there are different ones, please? Can we do that before we get to the next meeting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry; I thought I'd shared that. As of Friday, if I receive as I've asked, we would then take all of those items that are common, and we'd attach the names to each one if it's a similar one, the names behind them. They'd be collated, in other words.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bonnie?

MRS. B. LAING: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I was wondering: could these articles be sent out to us previous to the meeting, you know, even a couple of days ahead of time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MRS. B. LAING: I'm thinking we've got this nice package now, and we want to keep the binder here. So when would we have the opportunity to read it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think that's an excellent point. I should share with you that I was on a legislation committee in this government several years ago, and the sensitivity, as you know, with legislation goes sometimes to extremes. You know, it's stamped with, "Please destroy before reading," one extreme, all the way to, "Don't discuss with anybody." I recall then that we received legislation under confidential cover a week before the meeting. I'm talking about the government dealing with legislation, as a member of a government committee. It worked very well. I see no reason, if we have the material ready, why you can't have it in your hands 72 hours before the meeting or even sooner.

Frank, if I direct you to do that and the material is ready, it's not a problem to get it to the members, eh?

MR. WORK: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Either by government courier or however. One of the difficulties in getting it to members' offices is the members' offices getting it to the members. I don't want to be critical of members' offices, but . . .

Louise.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: I was going to say, Mr. Chairman, that normally binders containing information are collected, say, a week

before the meeting, and new information is added to it and delivered back to members a day or two before a scheduled meeting. If that's all right with members, we can certainly proceed that way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How would it be in Calgary-Bow? You don't want the manual there; you'd be here.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: That's the difficulty: where are the members going to be outside of session?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Depending on the size of the document, because I'm going to be asking the Clerk to summarize a variety of issues, and then the document is available if people want to read it.

DR. ELLIOTT: Mr. Chairman, we all have offices here on site, and that would be the office to which the manual would be delivered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you comfortable with that?

DR. ELLIOTT: It's our responsibility to use it then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Brian.

MR. EVANS: With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, if we're talking about 72 hours beforehand, when I'm not in session, I spend very little time in Edmonton. There aren't many people who vote for me in Edmonton. If we're going to take a day to get information over to the office here and then another day to get it couriered to my office, I'm likely to be on the way up here while it's getting over to my constituency office. So for my own well-being I would prefer that information be sent to my constituency office. I think, Louise, you have a good suggestion, that we keep our binders here in our Edmonton offices. We can review while we're here. That way, it's very easy for you to pick them up beforehand and update them. But I'd sure like to have the material that we're going to be discussing at meetings sent to my constituency office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.  
Bob, you on this?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: No; something else, just in terms of the binders. When we've finished that, I have another question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's go to that now because I want to talk about any potential travel in the new year. I want to try and get a handle on that budget item, as to what this committee's going to cost.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Fair enough.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not that governments traditionally think about that, but we're a special select committee, and we're very mindful of that. Right?

Bob, go ahead.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I guess very much along these lines: whether you see us having any kind of public hearings across the province or whether we'd be inviting maybe people with special expertise to come and join us. You've privately had some discussions about having a symposium. Perhaps we could bring

some people connected with some of these reports that are in our binder, if any of them are still available, or Table officers in other jurisdictions perhaps coming together in Edmonton or Calgary to meet and give us sort of a benefit of a round table discussion, whether we want to even commission people in the private sector or in our colleges or universities who have maybe some academic background in these questions, to maybe commission reports or discussion papers around some of these different issues and categories. I mean, I think it's wide open to us.

3:47

Then of course there's the whole question of whether the committee and ourselves will travel outside of the province. I'm just not clear in my mind what you see, Mr. Chairman, as being that process of the committee: whether we'll just have one more meeting before the end of the year and then an intense period in January or February. If so, what would be involved there? It seems to me that if we were to have any kind of symposia inviting people, we'd need to put something in place pretty quickly. Getting people here, even for February, would require a lot of work and organizational effort. I think at the moment there are lots of ideas. How we take the different ideas and incorporate them into our agenda I'm not sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Bob.

Last meeting Kurt Gesell made an excellent suggestion: that it's one thing to read something, but it's quite another to see the dynamics of rules working. My recollection, Kurt, if you'd care to speak to it, was that the dynamics are extremely different when you see them in action; therefore, we should only be visiting jurisdictions of legislators when they are sitting. Do you want to speak to that? I think this addresses Bob's point.

MR. GESELL: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I believe if we are going to travel to look at other Legislatures, we should do so when they are sitting. We should participate in the process: sit in the gallery and watch how they perform. The dynamics of what they actually do are part of the process, and a very important part. We can talk to experts in the system during that time, but I think we need to structure it in such a fashion that we're there when they are actually sitting. I think we're losing part of the perception, the ideas that might come to us, if we forgo that, if we just invite people from, say, Ontario, who have just passed a bunch of standing orders, ask them to come to speak to us or if we go there and just speak to some of the parliamentarians there. I think it's a dual type of situation where we try to get some information but we also see for ourselves how they behave in their Legislature and how they do business.

Let me just make a comment with respect to a seminar. I'm a little bit hesitant about that. The suggestion to involve people is good, but we've just gone through a process on the Constitution where we've had people going out and asking Albertans and Canadians almost every week how they felt about things. I'm a little bit concerned about how we do that. It would have to be done very appropriately in order not to overload people out there. They're going to say, "Well, here's another group coming around to ask for input, and we're getting tired of it." I'm getting that perception out there; I'm sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Kurt.

Halvar, and then Derek. Halvar, do you have a point?

MR. JONSON: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh. Derek?

MR. FOX: Just speaking in terms of the symposium that Bob and I have proposed, I think it's important, as we said earlier, that whatever we do be relevant to the people we represent. With that in mind, I think they need to know what we're doing as a committee, why we're doing it, and that they have the opportunity to be involved. I think that if we were to have a symposium, let's say over a period of a couple of days, with a fairly explicit agenda to deal with issues related to the process in the Legislature for Bills and budgets and public input or whatever, and we invited certain people to come, like maybe someone from each jurisdiction where change has occurred, we can learn from that.

I think it would be cost-effective compared to us as a committee traveling to other jurisdictions. I've sat in other Legislatures and watched their question periods, and it's interesting. But to really know what's going on there firsthand, I suppose, to really get a sense of it, you'd have to sit there over time and be there when it's Committee of the Whole, and I think that's too cumbersome. So I guess our idea with the symposium is not only to give us a chance in a relatively short period of time to get input on specific things from people who know, but it would give us as a committee a chance to let Albertans know that we're doing something on their behalf. I think that has a lot of potential.

We've talked earlier about seeking input: your suggestion about the media; we've solicited input from academia - we're all in contact with people at colleges, universities out there who deal with these issues and have a lot to say - and, most importantly, the larger group, the public at large. I'm empathetic with Kurt's concern; people are feeling some sort of input overload. But maybe through communications that we as individual members have with our constituents, either in an MLA report or in local newspaper articles, we could talk about the work of this committee: "If you have any ideas, let us know. Keep the cards and letters coming, folks." Then it would be up to the 83 members of the Assembly to funnel that input into the committee. If there's not a lot of it, so be it, but at least people know in the first instance that they had the opportunity for input, that the people who represent them were seeking that.

If we were to agree to such a thing, we'd have to be careful how it's structured, we'd have to make sure that it's going to work and not be unwieldy. I do think it will not only be useful to the committee, but it would be something that Albertans would appreciate and get involved in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I read the word "symposium" quite differently from "public hearing." A symposium would be on the basis of whom we feel would be helpful to this committee. We would solicit their views on, undoubtedly, a variety of matters. For example - and I say this without prejudice and without criticizing anybody - I fought for several years to ensure that any Bill introduced in this House that had an impact on my constituents had at least a two-week period between introduction and second reading. The Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce has a government affairs committee which works very hard on legislation. When Bills are introduced, often if they're sent by mail the Bill has passed second reading before they've received the Bill. I feel very strongly about this, particularly with small business, which has to bear the brunt of regulatory change. It seems to me that's very important, the concept of symposium - without knowing the clear definition of it - because they undoubtedly are representing through their businesses a lot of consumers. Those types of people would be very important to us, particularly small business. So I kind of like the idea of that. I feel quite comfortable with that.

That's totally different from putting an ad in the paper for the town hall meeting and getting somebody over a cat bylaw, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I think that idea has a lot of merit.

With regard to budget . . .

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, before we leave that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're determined we're not going to talk about budget here. Go ahead, Bettie.

MRS. HEWES: Before we leave it, Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that if this is an appropriate idea, we've got to come to some conclusions about it pretty quickly. I'm uneasy about this November 17 date for our next meeting because if we're talking about something in January or February, that requires a fair amount of planning. Would you like to ask the members if they've thought about a date?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: At this point I think it's just a little bit of brainstorming in that sense, you know, in terms of where we could potentially go. If this idea has merit or some interest amongst committee members, it would now be a matter of trying to give it some form or shape, or put some flesh on the bones so to speak. I haven't given it any particular thought in terms of when it would be held.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if we could ask Bob to put down on paper some of his thoughts about the form it would take. It seems to me that if we're going to invite comment from our various publics, it's got to be done sincerely; that is, it's got to be done early on in our processes. So I'm thinking the end of January, and if that's the case, then we've got to get on with it PDQ. I think it would be helpful, in other words - I'll try and make this more concise - if we had something on the table. Perhaps you could do that for our next meeting.

3:57

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Perhaps I could do it with the chairman and try and get something together well in advance so members have a chance to review it before that meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In terms of who we should talk to, where we should talk to them, visiting, travel, and so on, members may recall that last time I had visualized us visiting, for example, Ottawa. Whilst in Ottawa we could even utilize a subcommittee to send two or three members to the maritimes, two or three to Quebec City. Say spend a week; go down to the Ottawa region for a week rather than the committee traveling everywhere. Then we would rely on those committee members. We would authorize them to seek certain information, specific questions, or whatever. That's the sort of concept I had. I think so much depends on the reading of these documents that you have in your binder; i.e., the proposals Saskatchewan is looking at in their interim report. A lot of homework has to be done before we can determine, I think, what we should do.

We must also be mindful of the budget for the balance of this fiscal year and whatever travel we're going to do in the new year. I don't know how to approach this. Louise, you've worked with select committees. If the committee were to say all right, we'll visit Ottawa for a week, we will have subcommittees go to places I've just indicated, whether we would have two, three, five, or whatever people come here - we wouldn't be summoning witnesses; we're not in that business; we would be inviting experts or whatever - I don't know how you could get a handle on that

in terms of a budgetary amount. You know, if we take the Members' Services Committee meeting on a specific day for eight hours, that's a simplistic thing, right?

MRS. KAMUCHIK: That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The heritage fund. If you were going to Prince Rupert is maybe a simplistic thing; i.e., 11 or 15 members.

MR. JONSON: Very economical.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Very economical. So I don't know really what that approach should be unless I am able to tell you specifically where we are going, when we're going, how many are going, and for how long.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: That's right. And whether there's going to be a symposium, how many people will be invited, who will be invited, a day or two, what expenditures will we be looking at for these people participating from outside of Edmonton, and so on. So it's difficult to establish a budget until the committee has come down with a more definite plan of what it would like or hope to do.

MR. FOX: If I could just brainstorm a little further on this symposium suggestion, we're dealing with what sort of input we seek and consider here as a committee. I guess when Bob and I first talked about this, we saw this as something that would deal with the need to travel and visit other jurisdictions: that there would be more economy in terms of the work of this committee gained by inviting people here rather than us traveling there.

Let's just envision a process here where we draft a letter that all members are encouraged to insert in either their MLA reports or local newspapers soliciting input from Albertans to help aid the work of the committee; that a letter from the Chair go to a list of organizations in the province like the federation of small business, the chambers of commerce, the Federation of Labour, UMA, et cetera, soliciting input. We gather these things. This sort of all leads up to a symposium, perhaps in the city of Red Deer so we're not having a lot of meetings around the province. To that symposium we invite people who know what they're talking about. That may be either a Clerk or a chairperson of a parliamentary committee from the jurisdictions that have been dealing with these issues that we may otherwise go and visit. We deal with their presentations in a free-flowing sort of a debate atmosphere. That gives us the chance not only to maybe see what they're doing in Saskatchewan in their question period but to have that measured against what they're doing in Ottawa or New Brunswick or whatever jurisdiction we might want to deal with. So I just think there's a more dynamic opportunity there to measure things, debate things, consider things, and that would be the totality of our input. Initially when we came up with this idea, it was to deal with what may be perceived as a need to travel outside the province.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, we've got to decide what it is we're going to ask people about, don't we? Don't we have to have our list in shape first?

MR. FOX: Hopefully we'll do that on November 17.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A lot of it we would group then.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: It's sort of in two tracks. One is a track of the content, and the other is a track of the process, whatever that may be. The final, end result of whatever report this committee comes up with will be the result of the input, the content, the issues, the ideas, the proposals that are dealt with, but also it comes about at the end of a process of consultation, review, getting input, and so on. So we have to look at the report in two, and it seems to me that next time we meet, we'll be looking at all the issues that are on the table in the form of content. Then we also have to discuss what the process of the committee is in terms of a symposium. Do we commission discussion papers? Do we travel? Whatever. So that's the process. They sort of progress hand in hand as the committee carries out its work.

MRS. HEWES: You're going to write a paper on the objectives of it? That's what we want.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I'll put some thoughts on paper. Then it becomes the committee's property, and the committee can tear it up and throw it out and start over or pick and choose and come up with something as they see fit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On Derek's suggestion of writing the various groups, you know we must remember that we don't want to hear from executive directors of groups. To recognize the volunteer component of those groups, you automatically build in a time factor to get response. I think we must remember that.

MRS. B. LAING: Mr. Chairman, I was going to suggest that perhaps we open it up a little bit through written submissions. We did this with the advisory committee on human sexuality curricula, and we got a lot of response from ordinary people. All it cost was a couple of ads in the papers. We did; we got a lot of response not only just from ordinary citizens but also significant groups that had a stakeholder's position. That kind of opened it up to the general public as well.

4:07

MRS. KAMUCHIK: To pick up on Mr. Fox's suggestion as well, that the chairman and the committee prepare a letter to appear in various members' tabloids to their constituents, these may be published at irregular times, so the sooner the committee gets such a letter prepared in order to provide ample time for them to appear in their newsletters – it would be an inexpensive way to advertise what the committee is doing, because if we go to public advertising, if we go to all the dailies and the rural newspapers that come out once a week, it would be very expensive indeed. So the MLA newsletters are a good way to advertise very cheaply, but again you have to have the material ready.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Along that line, I think Mr. Horsman, with regard to the unanimous position of the House on a constitutional change, has sent to all political parties suggested correspondence and so on. I don't know how widely it was used, but it went to all political parties. I know he met with House leaders and discussed it.

Well, just to wrap up with regard to the travel question, I see us at a minimum going to Ottawa and then at a minimum subcommittees, perhaps under Mr. Jonson, dealing maybe with Queen's Park, la belle province in Quebec City, and maybe a joint meeting with the maritimes, the four provinces. I'm just thinking; they have common positions. They certainly have their Premiers' common position in the maritime provinces and so on. Perhaps you should leave that with me, and I will come up with something definitive

for the next meeting. We could maybe nail down at that time, Louise, a proposed budget if that would be in keeping.

Any other business to discuss? Any other matter to speak to that members wish to raise? Brian.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, do you want a formal endorsement of the principles as we have amended so that we do have something on record?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would be very comfortable with that. Would you incorporate the suggestion of Derek Fox? You could move the motion rather than having an amendment on the table or . . . Well, you proceed.

MR. EVANS: Certainly. I would move that this committee adopt as the principles of our parliamentary reform six principles: firstly, that the reform must respect tradition but be adaptable to change; secondly, the parliamentary rules must be understandable to parliamentarians and the majority of the general public; thirdly, that parliament must be meaningful and therefore relevant to society; fourthly, that parliamentary process must be efficient both in terms of time and cost; fifthly, that parliament must be caring since it exists to promote and reflect societal values; and sixth and ultimate, that parliament and the process be available and accountable to Albertans.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Discussion? Does that capture, Derek, your point?

MRS. HEWES: Did it end there? There's another sentence.

MR. FOX: The sentence following that was that their views should be sought, respected, and reflected in all the work we do.

MR. EVANS: Then I would add that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you add that? Discussion? Are we agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Okay, if there's no further business of the committee, the Chair will entertain a motion to adjourn.

MRS. B. LAING: I move.

[The committee adjourned at 4:14 p.m.]