

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
May 29, 1986

Public Hearing: Department of Finance (continued)

Mr. Chairman: — Now the transcript. I call the meeting to order.

Mr. Katzman: — Mr. Chairman, I am going to suggest that we came here with our notice, your name underneath it, suggesting . . . Now you're still in camera?

Mr. Chairman: — No, we're not. I've called the meeting to order.

Mr. Katzman: — You called the meeting to order but not out of camera.

Mr. Chairman: — Oh yes, the meeting is . . .

Mr. Katzman: — Well let's go as the notice said first. Mr. Chairman, let's decide who else we're calling, like we normally do, instead of playing political games like you want to do.

Mr. Engel: — Mr. Chairman, we have an issue outstanding from the previous meeting to be resolved, and at this time I'd like to move a motion. And if after this motion is moved and is dealt with, whether the government is going to allow us to operate as a Public Accounts Committee has over the tradition . . . I've been on this Public Accounts Committee back in 1971. I've served off and on in that time, and this is the first time when we've had motions that would limit the debate.

The deputy chairman's motion was that:

On the basis of the comptroller's statement regarding Pioneer Trust, this committee not consider the affairs of (the) same.

I think that that motion muzzles us. What is this committee here for if it's not to review the expenditures of public funds and the decisions which lead to the expenditure of public funds? That's what this committee is all about. If the government majority of the day is allowed to prevent that kind of review, we might as well close down this committee and save everybody a lot of time.

In the year under review, 1984-85, a number of events occurred with respect to the collapse of Pioneer Trust, events which ultimately resulted in the expenditure of millions of dollars of public funds. Pioneer Trust began to experience serious financial difficulties in this year and approached both the federal and provincial governments for assistance. The Minister of Finance signed a letter giving Pioneer Trust a provincial government guarantee. This government then withdrew that guarantee and the trust company collapsed — the biggest business failure in Saskatchewan's history.

All of this happened in the 1984-85 fiscal year, and you people are trying to say these issues cannot be discussed. So therefore, Mr. Chairman, I move:

That the motion of Mr. Glauser of May 22, 1986, that "on the basis of the comptroller's statement

regarding Pioneer Trust, this committee not consider the affairs of (the) same," now be reconsidered.

Mr. Chairman: — I'll recognize Mr. Weiman and then Mr. Katzman. You should sign that and hand it in, Allen.

Mr. Weiman: — I would like to bring forward a few points. First of all, in the four years that I have been here, I've never received a letter from the chairman of the committee refuting and challenging a motion that was made in the Public Accounts Committee.

I ask the chairman now, on record: the distribution list of the letter, was the distribution list of the letter just made available to the members of the Public Accounts Committee or to other persons?

Mr. Chairman: — I asked the clerk to circulate it to members of the committee. The press officer of the opposition caucus may well have given it to the press. I assume by the attendance of the press this morning that he probably did.

Mr. Weiman: — In other words, you're saying there is no press officer for Public Accounts Committee meetings; so if there was a broader distribution other than the Public Accounts Committee, you're saying that it more than likely could have been the press officer of the NDP party.

Mr. Chairman: — No, the press officer of the opposition caucus.

Mr. Weiman: — I would take it the opposition caucus is the NDP party.

Mr. Chairman: — No, it is not.

Mr. Weiman: — Is it not?

Mr. Chairman: — Not by any stretch of the imagination.

Mr. Weiman: — Well, I'll leave that line.

Mr. Katzman: — It is, I think, a technical point. He is employed by the NDP members.

Mr. Chairman: — His name is Garry Aldridge. I don't think that's any great secret.

Mr. Weiman: — I would like to comment on a couple of statements by the member of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg which prompted the motion that he put forward. The member of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg stated this morning that he is putting forward the motion to resolve an issue from the last meeting.

There was an issue in the last meeting which was resolved, and once you resolve an issue, there isn't anything to resolve any more. I find that redundant, and I find that illogical.

Point number two, he also went on to state: the Public Accounts Committee has the right to review expenditures of any department. And the crux of the previous motion

was that expenditures regarding Pioneer Trust by the Government of Saskatchewan to the public of Saskatchewan who had invested in Pioneer Trust, those expenditures were not made in the year under review. And that was the point of the motion which we resolved last week. So if he wishes to discuss and is concerned about the expenditures, that, too, is redundant and out of place.

I would like to make reference to comments that one can paraphrase or read through the letter that the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee had made available to the Public Accounts Committee as of yesterday in the Legislative Assembly through distribution, as well as, I take it, through the actual words of the chairman himself, who said that it may have been distributed outside of that Public Accounts Committee.

And to paraphrase, he is stating in a sense that there are — I won't paraphrase; I will state — you said that the majority rammed this through. He goes onto state that the government and its members are clearly afraid to have this affair discussed further, and so have forced through a gag order, which I find inappropriate.

I've always believed that the Public Accounts Committee is a non-partisan committee to look at the expenditures and the judicious spending of the government on behalf of the citizens of Saskatchewan. And by the fact that this letter was distributed, and by the fact that the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee had used such terminology, in itself has politicized an issue, and therefore politicized a committee which, in my view, was never meant to be politicized. It's non-partisan.

It also makes one wonder whether, after following a legitimate process in the Public Accounts Committee and that legitimate process is that resolutions are determined within this committee by a majority consensus — failing that, if we cannot get a majority view within this Public Accounts Committee, we go the one step further of presenting a motion. A motion is democratically voted upon. Once that motion has been passed, we believe that it's been democratically brought about.

Coming back to the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, who through his motion did not like that democratic process because he says there was an issue left over from last week that was not resolved — it was resolved, and it was resolved in the proper way.

The chairman has made reference in his letter, and so has the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, that they did not have the opportunity to adequately discuss that particular issue. Anybody who gleans through the *Public Accounts* verbatim from last week will clearly see that there was many options open to discuss. I cannot apologize for the presence or absence of members who were not here, which negated them being able to discuss this issue. But the fact remains that there was adequate opportunity to discuss this issue.

The chairman himself has stated in the *Public Accounts* verbatim — I won't quote all of his things, because some of the things that he has stated is quite unparliamentary —

he stated very clearly at the top of 199: "I'm not going to call the vote until we've had a discussion." And then we continued on to discuss more. It was pointed out to the chairman various times by members of this committee, when it looked like it might come to loggerheads, that there was no intent to take away from the members of this Public Accounts Committee their right to discuss in full discussion.

After the discussion was over, a vote was called. There were no interjections by members of this Public Accounts Committee to suggest that they were cut off; there were no motions or points of order to state that they had not had the opportunity to fully discuss this issue. The motion was passed. The issue was resolved.

I cannot try to second-guess or surmise why this letter was distributed. I suppose that is what the press is here for, is to determine the motive behind it — because obviously it can't be the issue at hand because the issue at hand was resolved last week — and I might add that members of the press were here last week. I might also add the verbatim is public, it's in the public domain, and people can make their judgement on what transpired here last week.

I cannot see the reasoning behind passing out this letter. I cannot see that after a motion has been brought about democratically that members of this committee, who did not agree with the motion which was democratically ascertained, would want to now bring it back to the table. It's almost like saying, well I didn't like that pitch, I want to start the ball game all over again.

The fact of the matter is that's how our parliamentary system works; it works on majority vote, and, once that majority vote has been taken, we abide by that. Otherwise the whole structure of parliament collapses; you have nothing but anarchy, and we have to abide with that. And there is times when that is not comfortable; there's times when it doesn't feel right, but we still have to abide with it. That's what we got elected for, to maintain the rules and the structures of our parliamentary system in this country. It sounds to me like a lot of sour grapes and poor sportism.

Now I want to make one more reference to what the last motion stated which we resolved. The concern, for my part, and I will not speak for other members of Public Accounts Committee, the concern that I have as a member on this committee is that there is appropriate, judicious, and wise expenditure of the public purse, in whatever department. That is our role.

I understand that when we had Finance committee here, and we came to item 7 which pertained to the Saskatchewan Heritage Fund — in so far as moneys expended to the public of Saskatchewan who had investments in Pioneer Trust — that those expenditures did not take place in the year '84-85 which is the year under review that we are attending right now.

So it tells me that if I am concerned about the expenditures, and that's what Public Accounts Committee is here for, that I cannot hypothetically guess what those expenditures are. Number one, it is still ongoing. So I can't guess on how much is expended and

whether it was expended judiciously. I suspect that a lot of that comment would be brought forward in the proper forum, whether at question period in the Assembly or the estimates, which allow again — members of the opposition — full venue for debate. Not one minute, one hour! They can continue it on, full venue, in the public's presence.

I do not know why then we are arguing a hypothetical case. And to back that up I will make reference to a letter that was distributed to us this morning, and I believe it was from the auditor, and I will make reference to the third paragraph, that:

During the audit of 1985 Saskatchewan Heritage Fund financial statements, my representatives examined a letter dated October 4, 1985 from the liquidator of the Pioneer Trust . . .

Which is well and good, and which the auditor should bring to our attention. It is at that point that the auditor, from my perspective, was concerned about the amounts of money expended by the Government of Saskatchewan. I think it states full well that October 1985 is five to seven months past the year under review.

The third point I wish to make is: those expenditures which transpired after March 31, 1985, will come forward in the next year under review. And when those expenditures do come forward, members of this committee, whoever they may be, have the opportunity to question at length the wisdom of those expenditures.

One final point that I wish to make, and again I will let the public and the press make their judgements upon this. There's a quotation from the chairman of the Public Accounts on page 201, the last paragraph:

I would be prepared to leave the matter for another year . . ."

He states that he would let the matter go for another year, to be resolved in the appropriate year under review. But he goes on to state:

. . . except that I know full well, in the unlikely event that the Conservative Party wins the election, if I then want to ask about any activities for the department for the year '84-85 as to what steps were taken to ensure that the letter of guarantee given to Pioneer Trust was given with some knowledge . . . I know I'll be met with the argument . . .

That very statement at the end of the Public Accounts Committee meeting of last week, as well as the letter that was distributed to the Public Accounts Committee and, therefore, as the chairman has suggested, somehow distributed to the press, and with the terminologies used in this letter, indicates to me that this Public Accounts Committee, which is non-partisan, has become politicized, and has become politicized by the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

Your words do not lie. You stated emphatically that you would leave it lie to the appropriate year. However,

because of a concern of an election, concern of an opposition party, you wanted to bring it forward.

I'll close by saying that, through the proper parliamentary procedure of debate, discussion, and motion, the issue of last week was resolved. Therefore, I cannot vote for Mr. Engel's motion. I believe it to be totally out of order; I believe it to be totally inappropriate; and I will be voting against the motion.

Mr. Chairman: — I have a speaker's list, gentlemen, which is as follows: myself, Katzman, and Glauser, in that order; Mr. Meagher, then Mr. Engel.

I don't intend to repeat — if I can just finish my notes here — I don't intend to repeat what Mr. Engel said, but I do want to make a couple comments.

One is that a casual perusing of the verbatim of last week, I think, would suggest to anyone that I felt rather strongly about it, and a conscious decision was made to raise the issue to the public forum. We think, the opposition caucus feels, that this issue goes to the heart of what the Public Accounts is supposed to be doing. It is our function to discuss all issues, not just those the government feels comfortable with, and during the period of time I've been chairman we've done that.

There's always questions which are not appropriate to be discussed at all, for good and legitimate reasons. But, so far as I know, we haven't heretofore had a motion which states in blatant terms that this issue's not going to be discussed — no rational basis for that, in my view; simply the government doesn't want to be embarrassed by the discussion of the issue.

In my view, that's not appropriate. I cannot imagine such a motion being passed in the Legislative Assembly. There is something called closure, but it is almost never used in this legislature and is never used for that purpose at all. I don't think the motion is appropriate here either.

The member from Saskatoon Fairview said I was politicizing the committee. All I can say is, if raising questions about the expenditure of public funds is politicizing the committee, then so be it. That's what I'm elected to do. That is my role and responsibility as an opposition member.

It has been said that the expenditures were made in '85-86; probably many of them were. But the collapse occurred in '85, the loss on the investment occurred in '85, and I think most of the mistakes were made in 1985-86. And it is the '85-86 — I may have that wrong '84-85 year, it is the '84-85 year where the mistakes were made, in our view, where the loss occurred. And it is the '84-85 year that we have under discussion now.

There are some obvious questions which cry out to be asked with respect to the role of the Department of Finance in Pioneer Trust. It was not a well-kept secret previous to November of '85 that that company was in trouble. There were rumours on the street in Regina that I heard. I assume the Department of Finance had access to that information, and there's some obvious questions as to what the Department of Finance did to forestall the

calamity which eventually occurred.

I say, with respect to the history of the committee, we have . . . I want to make a comment as well that the mandate of the Provincial Auditor is narrower, I regret to say, than the mandate of the committee.

The Provincial Auditor — and I am crudely summarizing it — has an attest function of: be sure the figures are added up, and so on; make sure that the expenditures were authorized by the legislature. He does not have a mandate to get into what is called comprehensive auditing. That is to ask about the efficiency, effectiveness, and the economy of government expenditures, as the federal Auditor General does.

The federal Auditor General has such a mandate and uses it, *à la* the Bonaventure. That is his mandate, but our mandate is much broader. The mandate of this committee includes the responsibility to ask questions about the efficiency, the economy, and the effectiveness of government expenditures.

Clearly, as I say, there are questions which cry out to be asked with respect to the Pioneer Trust thing in that regard; we wish to ask them. And that has always been done in the past. In 1982-83 we discussed the department of northern Saskatchewan in exhaustive detail. Many of the questions weren't even in the year under review. The questions with respect to northern housing are one that come to mind, and were not particularly in the year under review. I felt that some of those questions were doing some damage, that I don't think government members appreciated, but they were clearly in order. Equally clearly, the public were asking the same questions. That was obvious, I think, from the by-election in PA-Duck Lake.

So the questions were perfectly in order and legitimate, and they were asked. And no one interfered with your right to do so. Equally clearly, questions to the Department of Finance about the Pioneer Trust fiasco are in order. The issue in itself is bad enough — it involves \$20 million at a minimum — but it's also a very bad precedent.

Standing outside . . . I gather they're not. I gather they've ambled off to a coffee shop or something. But waiting on this committee are the officials of the Department of Finance . . . Health, sorry, the Department of Health. Given the questions which have arisen in the legislature recently, we clearly have a responsibility to put some questions to the Department of Health with respect to contracts of service, the amount of the contracts of service, to whom they're given, and for what purposes. Are the member from Assiniboia and I going to be met with another gag order which reads, in effect: contracts of service, as they pertain to Department of Health, shall not be asked in the committee?

The question which the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg . . .

Mr. Engel: — If I could just make an interjection. Just because it isn't paid for in the year under review, you know, the contract was made and the contract wasn't

quite completed, then you say we can't discuss it.

Mr. Katzman: — I assume, Mr. Chairman, we're going to have the right . . . (inaudible) . . .

Mr. Chairman: — I will close by simply saying that the precedent here is a very bad one. There's a reason why the chairman in this committee, unlike any other except one, the chairman is a member of the opposition. That's because . . . and that is done intentionally to ensure that the opposition have a full and unfettered right and a full and unfettered ability — more than a right — a full and unfettered ability to ask questions of witnesses brought before this committee. You now seek to limit that, I think, in an area which is unacceptable, but the precedent is even more unacceptable.

So, having said that, I will recognize the next person on the list, who was the member from Rosthern.

Mr. Katzman: — I'll save most of my comments for later, but I will make a couple now.

Mr. Chairman, you did what I would call a Freudian slip as you were speaking, but you spoke the truth when you spoke and made your slip. Your slip said '85-86 is where we should discuss that, and that is correct — not '84-85, as you are attempting to do.

In 10 years out of the 11 that I have been a member on this committee, and in the last four when I have sat on the government side of the House, there has been in this committee where all members, no matter what political party you represented in the Legislative Assembly, took part and were the lead critic for all different departments, no matter which they be, and went at it just as vehemently as if they would be opposition or government — it didn't matter.

We have an issue here now which, by the auditor's statement . . . I was not here last week, as Mr. Engel was not here last week, so we were not part of that debate, and we've just been able to read the *Hansard* portions. I read that the comptroller . . . and the letter from the auditor today said, by the rules, this is an issue we will discuss in the '85-86 estimates. You were saying you don't like the rules of this place all of a sudden, Mr. Chairman, because you can't do as you wish and bring up the '85-86 issue under '84-85.

Mr. Chairman, we do not have in this committee — since the new government is in, the Conservatives — a member of this committee as Mr. Nelson from Yorkton used to be during the years when I was in the opposition, who would come in with a book of all the things they were not to let the opposition bring up in this committee. Mr. Nelson came in with a loose-leaf binder about 3 inches thick with all the things he was to block and stop us from talking about.

We have never done that in this committee but we have been very careful to say, we stay under the year under review. And what you are now saying to us is, you don't like that rule in this case and you want to change it. That's the nut of this whole argument.

And, Mr. Chairman, I think that you will have to follow the rules. And that's what Mr. Glauser's motion, I seem to read, says. This is an issue for the '85-86 estimates, where it should properly be dealt with all the figures, the facts. And you're saying, no, no, I don't want to follow that rule because I don't like what I might see in the future and, therefore, I want to discuss it under this year. And we could, if we spent some hours, dig up precedents where priorly we've always . . . something may have started in a year, but it concluded in the year and that's the year you do it under, which is the '85-86.

And therefore, Mr. Chairman, I must support Mr. Glauser's motion remain the way it is and be opposed to Mr. Engel's, because you want to change the whole rules of this committee.

Occasionally things not under the year are allowed to be discussed when the department wishes to volunteer them, but that's the only time. In order to explain their set-up they say, well, this happened which caused this which caused this the next year. And then we say, oh, well, you've solved the problem, therefore we don't need you. You know, we accept that. And all of a sudden the rules are changed. And I repeat, the members of this committee have not been given a blocked door. And I think, you know, it's been a fair committee all the way through until all of a sudden you don't like the rules.

Mr. Chairman: — I give you my assurance . . . I don't know how you can judge whether my questions will be in the year under review; you haven't heard them. I give you my assurance, all of the questions I wish to ask will pertain to the activities of the Department of Finance in the year under review — all of them.

Mr. Glauser: — Are you on the list for the second time?

Mr. Chairman: — No, but I didn't think you'd mind if I interjected.

Mr. Glauser: — Okay. First of all, I want to start off by asking you a question. You said that a conscious decision was made. By whom? And why?

Mr. Chairman: — Well, you did.

Mr. Glauser: — No, no. You started off your remarks by saying, a conscious decision was made in regard to formulating this letter.

Mr. Chairman: — Oh, Mr. Engel and I made a conscious decision. I don't recall the comment you're referring to. Mr. Engel and I certainly made a conscious decision to send that letter out in advance and raise the profile of this issue. The decision to raise the profile of the issue was done consciously and after some thought, Mr. Glauser. I readily admit that.

Mr. Glauser: — The purpose of this committee and its function is to examine, with keeping the three E's in mind. Your evaluation of our responsibility, vis-a-vis federal, is that the federal government is under total comprehensive audit. The provincial Government of Saskatchewan, at this point, has not gone into total comprehensive audit.

So in other words we're looking at efficiencies and economy, as opposed to effectiveness. We have not gone totally into the effectiveness — whether a program is working, whether it isn't working, and so on. I'll give you an example of the federal government going into the post office and doing a comprehensive audit. That is not done to that extent in the province of Saskatchewan. So I just want to set the record straight on that.

What you want to discuss here are the events leading up to the collapse in December of 1985, and no funds were paid out prior to March 31 . . . in December, 1984, pardon me, when the collapse of the Pioneer Trust, no funds were paid out prior to March 31, 1985.

Mr. Chairman: — But a commitment was given before March.

Mr. Glauser: — It is given that there were no funds paid out prior to March 31, 1985, and I will go back to the remarks made by the comptroller, Mr. Kraus, on page 197. He says:

What I was saying was that the actual pay-outs to the unsecured depositors didn't occur until the 1985-86 year.

And that is what . . .

Mr. Engel: — Read the rest of it.

Mr. Glauser: — I didn't interrupt you when you were reading your motion, so the record is there for everybody else to read.

And I put forward the motion on the basis of that, and it is further substantiated by the letter that has been put before this committee by the Provincial Auditor: "During the audit of the 1985 . . ." and I don't want to repeat what Mr. Weiman said, but I think to substantiate my motion, that is exactly what I have to do:

During the audit of the 1985 Saskatchewan Heritage Fund financial statements, my representatives examined a letter dated October 4, 1985 from the liquidator of Pioneer Trust which corroborated the reasonableness of the Comptroller's estimate of the loss in the value of the investment in Pioneer Trust . . .

So there are two bases that prompted me to make the motion that I did, and I might add, without any prompting from any one of the ministers, or anybody else, simply because I took it at face value that we are not looking at the expenditures during the year under review.

You seem to suggest in your remarks, Mr. Chairman, that there was something similar to closure being adopted in this committee, which is simply not the case. And I can only reiterate the politicizing that you, yourself, brought into this forum with your statements on page 201, and I don't need to inform the press any more of it, or anybody else, the public. It is there for everybody to see.

During my four years in here, regardless of what you had to say about DNS or whoever else, regardless of what you

might say about having other departments come in here, there is no intention to prevent any discussion on any of those items which will come up in any department, and I felt it was an exercise in futility.

If we are wanting to look at the numbers of Pioneer Trust, then we'd better have the full details. And the liquidator is not even finished with the liquidation of the company, so it is premature what you're wanting to do. To suggest that there would be any curtailment, as you did in your statements there, of reviewing it in the year 1986, when the '85-86 documents come forward by the auditor, is absolutely wrong. You are setting up hypothetical cases that shouldn't even exist.

Mr. Meagher: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, I just want to add a few comments. This letter in my view constitutes an abuse of the privilege of not only this committee but, as chairman of the committee, the privilege that you have as chairman of this legislative committee, for partisan, political reasons.

And it is unfortunately not the first example of abuse of the committee and the privileges of the committee. I recall last year you, as chairman, raising allegations in the House that I, in this committee, had made comments about wanting jails to be black dungeons and that sort of thing. And when you then perused the verbatim you found that they were untrue and, by leave of the House, I was permitted to respond and ask for an apology from you, and it was never forthcoming.

That kind of abuse of this privilege, of this committee, is intolerable — for partisan, political reasons — and I want to simply suggest to you that as chairman of this legislative committee, you get back to the business of the committee and quit playing politics, and allow us to perform as we're constituted to perform and examine the legitimate accounts of departments and agencies of the government, in the year under review, as we're supposed to.

Mr. Engel: — Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I think there's a couple of issues that need to be raised here. And one is that I see the terms of reference of the Public Accounts Committee going beyond just the material that's in the auditor's report.

Now maybe we've relied too heavily on Mr. Lutz and have just usually stayed within the terms of reference of what he's mentioned in his report. But I see our role and I think Paul will agree with me . . . When we were in Charlottetown at the conference of Public Accounts Committees, and the case studies they had there were such that showed us in some provinces and some jurisdictions they got involved and got to the bottom of issues that needed to be discussed, and aired in full the problem that existed and to avoid the same kind of future mistakes.

And I think here we have one area where, if I read . . . and I want to read the rest of it into the record, of a quote from Mr. Kraus on page 197, when he says that "pay-outs . . ."

I'll read the whole sentence:

What I was saying was that the actual pay-outs to

the unsecured depositors didn't occur until the 1985-86 year. Notwithstanding that, we did recognize the loss on the investment that the government had in Pioneer for the year ending March 31, '85.

Now surely it's the prerogative of this committee to look into that question, and what did they recognize as a loss and why, and what events were occurring in the year under review that led to the collapse of Pioneer Trust.

And here's one of the largest companies that went under in Saskatchewan's history, a company that I was proud of. And I know a lot of people that made original investments and were shareholders in that company and built a company that failed. And you want to move a motion in this committee and state that we're not going to consider the affairs of Pioneer Trust in any way, shape, or form?

All you have to do is challenge us when we're asking questions here that that's not under the year under review, and the discussion on that particular line of question we're getting into would be stopped. But to blanketly pass resolutions that I, in effect, see as gagging our role as a committee . . .

It's just a blanket statement to say, look, we're not going to discuss anything that relates to Pioneer Trust — period — or any of their affairs. And when it's pointed out that events leading up to . . . And we recognize the loss on the investment that the government had in Pioneer for the year ending March 31, 1985. Those issues need to be discussed.

And I think it's time we get down to the basics and have this committee function, like the members were saying. I agree with that. I've watched you fellows in this committee. When it was an issue that you didn't think was political in nature, you'd get involved and ask all kinds of questions. But the minute it's a little bit of a political nature, you try and stonewall the discussion. And I don't think that's the role of this committee.

If you want to get down to saying, what's happening in Saskatchewan; why would a company like Pioneer Trust have to move out of our province? It's the only financial institution of that magnitude that had a head office here. I think we should have done everything in our power to promote it and to make sure that it stays alive. What happened? Why are we spending this kind of money bailing out? You have press reports of Will Klein's diary, an insider's view that gives all the dates that led up to it. In fact, I could refer you to a statement by Mr. Young saying the mess began in 1982, and it goes even beyond that.

And so I think if we miss the opportunity to discuss this under this year which is the year under review, if we miss that opportunity, we've closed the door to that debate and that discussion. And I think it's the prerogative of this committee to discuss that issue and bring it to a head.

I'd strongly insist that you people take another look at what you're really trying to do. This motion is a clear attempt to cover up the entire Pioneer Trust fiasco; to prevent Finance department officials from answering a number of basic questions, which Mr. Kraus alluded to —

to answer a number of basic questions about what the government knew, when it knew it, and how it reacted in the times leading up to the trust company's collapse.

And for that reason I say, you rescind that motion; you open it up that we can discuss what were relevant issues under the year under review, or this committee can't function. It's just that simple. And I think we should have that question as soon as the debate is over.

Mr. Chairman: — There's one person left on the speaker's list. That's Mr. Katzman.

Mr. Katzman: — Mr. Chairman, I would be short. It's interesting that we all agree the moneys paid out for '85-86; we all agree that '84-85 is the year of the public accounts we're discussing.

Mr. Sveinson: — We all agree the company closed in '84-85.

Mr. Katzman: — We all agree that anybody who wishes to ask questions about issues that are not in the '84-85 thing can be done in the House under estimates — Minister of Finance, I believe. And we all have in the past history of this committee discussed the year under review. The year under review is '84-85.

Both the auditor and the comptroller seem to indicate that '85 is . . . just means the '85-86 report is where the issue will be handled in the blue book, and therefore Mr. Glauser's motion that we handle this issue under the '85-86 book is correct; and therefore Mr. Engel's comment that we ignore the history of this committee and past precedent and go to a year that is not under review. And therefore I will vote, as I said earlier, against Mr. Engel's motion because he is asking to go out of the year under review, which has not been the precedent.

Mr. Sveinson: — Well, just listening to the member from Rosthern, I suggest to you: why are you afraid to open this under the year under review as it relates to the year under review? If there's any debate on pay-outs, or any debate on any other area that fails in '85-86, well at that time we can deal with it.

I suggest that Mr. Glauser is being directed from somebody outside this committee to stonewall this whole debate in this committee. I suggest very emphatically that you are not considering within the motion the year under review . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and I just want to finish this, Mr. Glauser.

You suggest that, on the basis of the comptroller's statement regarding Pioneer Trust, the statement be not considered the affairs of the same. Now it's not even clear in my mind exactly what you mean, but obviously you've decided through this motion to stonewall the whole debate of this particular company as it relates to the year under review.

And I suggest to you that certainly you didn't write this motion; you got direction from one of your ministers. Whether you want to raise that point or not, I believe that stonewalling this committee is almost unprecedented in this province. I haven't got any idea of where it goes

beyond this province. But I have sat in this committee when in fact we've been three days short of the year under review and we've been denied debate on one issue that I raised. As a result of the letter, which was certainly true, you raised the motion at the time that stopped the debate on that letter.

I suggest to you that this company did go under in the year under review, and there are a lot of things that could be debated at length in this committee that cannot be debated in the House at length, simply because of the nature of the committee. And I suggest to you that we should amend this motion to allow us to get into the debate on why the company closed, which was certainly an event that happened in the year under review. And if, as the member from Rosthern states, there are pay-outs and issues that do not fall in the year under review, we'll just have to by-pass those until we can sit again in '87 and discuss those events.

Why would you, or the members of the Conservative caucus, why would you be prepared to stop the debate here in this committee as it relates to the year under review? And that's exactly what you've done with this motion.

Mr. Glauser: — The member from Regina North West certainly wasn't sitting in this room, either last week or up to just coming in now, or he would have heard . . .

Mr. Sveinson: — I wasn't taking orders from a minister, though.

Mr. Glauser: — You listen. I didn't interrupt you.

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order.

Mr. Glauser: — And where I stated that this thing came up out of the blue here, where I stated that I in no way was being instructed. And if you would like to put it into words, that I have lied to this committee . . .

Mr. Sveinson: — Would you say that under oath, that you were not directed by a minister of the Crown?

Mr. Glauser: — You do not have the floor.

Mr. Sveinson: — I'm not suggesting that you're lying.

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. He was quiet . . . Now the member from Saskatoon Mayfair let you make some remarks which were provocative. I think you owe it to him to allow him to reply without being interrupted.

Mr. Glauser: — I will repeat again for the verbatim that I was under no instructions whatsoever; I was going by how I conceive the workings of this committee must go. And we deal with items under the year under review, as you found out by coming into here last year with that letter, as you say, which was not in the year under review, and it was prevented from . . . So there's precedents for not dealing with things that aren't in the year under review.

And I repeat again that under no circumstances am I ever taking instructions from anybody as to how I'm going to

conduct myself in this committee. And if you want to reiterate and then, more or less, say that I'm lying, that's where it sits.

Mr. Sveinsson: — I'm not saying you're lying. I'm just saying that you wouldn't state that same thing under oath.

Mr. Katzman: — Would you like to challenge him out in the hall where you can be sued?

Mr. Sveinsson: — No, that's on the record. I'm just . . .

Mr. Katzman: — Would you like to stand out and say that where he can sue you for it? Where you're responsible would you like to go into the hall and say that where you're responsible?

Mr. Sveinsson: — I'm just suggesting that . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order.

Mr. Sveinsson: — . . . as a result of other happenings within other committees, I realize that you do, from time to time, take direction. I think that your government obviously thinks this is a hot enough potato to, in fact, squelch it if possible, and obviously this motion does that. And as a result, members of the opposition don't have a chance to enter into debate on the actual undertakings by cabinet and by the government vis-a-vis the closure of this company.

There were some idiosyncrasies that I don't think anybody has ever been clear on. And I think they should be raised in this committee, and they happened in the year under review. I mean all companies, all closures are ongoing. I'm sure that probably in 1987 there will still be a few measures within the closure of that corporation that are still unfinished, and obviously they will be dealt with in the following year.

But I suggest that the company did go under in the year under review and that we should expand this motion to include the areas that could be debated in this committee in the year under review.

Mr. Chairman: — I've got myself on the list next; then the member for Prince Albert . . .

Mr. Sveinsson: — I think it abrogates . . .

Mr. Chairman: — I'll let the member finish. I'll let him finish.

Mr. Sveinsson: — If you stop the debate from either side of the House on an issue as completely . . . I just think it's — I'm almost speechless, that the government would in fact initiate a motion of this nature . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I was up hours ago, Cal.

Mr. Chairman: — Personal insults don't add much to the discussion. I want to make a comment; then the member from Prince Albert and then the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Engel made a comment, quoted Mr. Kraus's comment where he said on the bottom, the last line of page 197:

What I was saying was that the actual pay-outs to the unsecured depositors didn't occur until the 1985-86 year. Notwithstanding that, we did recognize the loss on the investment that the government had in Pioneer for the year ending March 31, '85 (which is the year under review).

And then on page 199, Mr. Weiman, in the left-hand column, said:

No, I will not admit that. But I am stating that it is not whether you have the right to ask the questions or not. What I am stating is whether it's appropriate that 2.7(7) is even in the auditor's report.

"I assume it was because of that that we had *Public Accounts* document 11 of '86 tabled this morning" — which is a comment by the Provincial Auditor explaining why he had included those comments in his Provincial Auditor's report for that year and stating it was appropriate.

So I add the comments of the Provincial Auditor's report — I add the comments of the Provincial Auditor of public document number 11 of '86 — to what Mr. Kraus has said earlier with respect to the date of the loss occurring. Clearly there are questions within the year under review that should be asked.

Having said that, I recognize the member from Prince Albert.

Mr. Meagher: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to pose a question to you as chairman of this committee, that: if in fact we are unable to keep control of the committee and keep the committee functioning as it's delegated by the legislature to do, and if irresponsible members of the committee on any issue that they feel is political and worth debating should throw out letters to the press and others and bring in debates on expenditures out of the proper year, how do you suggest then that this committee could function at all?

For instance, I may want to bring in a political issue that is current in Prince Albert, but several years back, under the previous administration — an expenditure that was inappropriate. How do you suggest that this committee maintain its proper role, given those circumstances? — if I should simply go out and write a letter and say, I think I'd like to talk about the box factory in Prince Albert 25 years ago.

Mr. Chairman: — I give you an unqualified guarantee that all the questions I ask will pertain to the activities of the Department of Finance in the year under review. That's an unqualified guarantee I give you. There's no qualifications to that.

I don't have a speaking list right now. If members are ready . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm sorry. I may have forgotten to write it down.

Mr. Weiman: — I would just like to make reference again to a couple of comments. First of all, regarding the

member from Regina North West: I would suggest that you read the verbatim of not only last Thursday, but read the verbatim of the last couple of months, indeed if not years, to find out exactly what we are talking about.

Mr. Sveinsson: — I know exactly what you're talking about. And I interject on a personal point of order that I have followed very closely the . . .

Mr. Chairman: — That's not a point of order; that's not a personal point of privilege.

Mr. Weiman: — The member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg had stated that his main concern is to avoid future mistakes. And I suppose that one could read into that and state that there was a mistake made. I would like to go on further on that. If there was a mistake made in terms of the expenditures, I find a great deal of difficulty identifying a mistake of reimbursing investors who lost their money. But, however, if you use it that way, so be it.

He also went on to indicate that the members of the committee — and I'm not speaking for the whole committee because I don't think he was referring to members of his particular party; he was referring to the members of the government — he went on to state that: "As soon as it becomes political they do not wish to discuss it."

I think that's a point well-taken because that's what the Public Accounts Committee is supposed to be — non-partisan — as I stated in my earlier comments, my opening comments. And I think it's important that we safeguard that, that we don't make this a political forum. We have the Legislative Assembly, the Chamber, for that. This is never intended to be a forum for debate to score political points.

Now in so far as a couple of comments made by the chairman: he had quoted myself as stating, on page 199, that I wasn't sure " . . . whether it's appropriate (or not) that 2.7(7) (should be) is even in the auditor's report." That was a legitimate concern because, if he would have gone on further to state my next pronouncement on that matter, which he neglected to, it goes on to say that the reason I was concerned — and I wasn't sure whether it was appropriate or not and I wanted further information from the auditor to convince me of that — and I will quote:

Mr. Chairman: Well it's there.

Mr. Weiman: No, but that's (not) what I'm saying. That's why I have to have that information from Mr. Lutz regarding when he received this information that told him — the most recent information from the liquidator — which prompted him to suggest that there's money missing, or there's money lost, and we have to find out why — (and that's what we're here for) — or are we going to be able to recoup that (money).

And I thank the auditor for submitting item 11 which answers that question. After having answered that question, then I can ascertain whether it's appropriate or not. It was a question to find out whether it should have

been there in the first place. I see the date's rendered on this.

Now the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg — and I may be incorrect on that; it may have been the member from Regina Centre — had gone on to state a counter-argument that Mr. Kraus had stated that:

What I was saying was that the actual pay-outs to the unsecured depositors didn't occur until the 1985-86 year.

And I think we've all agreed to this now, but:

Notwithstanding that, (and that's the last leg that they're trying to stand on now), we did recognize the loss on the investment that the government had in Pioneer for the year ending March 31, '85. But as far as the pay-outs go and all of that activity, that was . . . (in '85-86).

Now I don't mean to nit-pick or split hairs, but, if the members wish to discuss losses within the year that pertain to the government's investment — and that's what's in the auditor's report, not to the pay-out to all the investors who had invested in Pioneer Trust — specifically the auditor's concern in the report on page 32 has to deal with three government investments.

I have never stated, and I'm on record in the verbatim as stating, that that should not be discussed. In fact, the chairman has already quoted me in stating: "if you wish to discuss item 7, which is your privilege, discuss item 7." I'm on record saying that. And item 7 only pertains to three government investments. It does not pertain to letters going back and forth. It does not pertain to a hypothetical situation where the Department of Finance has to guess what's in a minister's mind. It has nothing to do with the operation of Pioneer Trust, which was a private corporation. It has nothing to do with the furtherance of the government determining that we would come to the aid of investors who had money invested in Pioneer Trust.

Specifically item 2.7(7) deals only with three very specific investments; and we had never indicated otherwise, that you could not discuss those items. And it is in the verbatim. It was the chairman himself, after that discussion, goes on to state, and I will just pick it out for you:

"On the basis of the comptroller's statement regarding Pioneer Trust, this committee does not consider the affairs of same." (And that of course was the motion signed by Mr. Glauser.) Which somewhat, by the way, precludes any discussion of item 7 as well.

Now that's an assumption that you, as the chairman, made. I don't know whether it was in a moment of emotion or the heat of debate . . .

Mr. Chairman: — But the member from Saskatoon Mayfair agreed with me.

Mr. Weiman: — Ah, the follow-up to it was my quote

immediately after your statement on that page, 200, that if you wish to discuss item 7, discuss item 7. We've never blocked debate — or what you call gagged or rammed through — anything that did not allow you to discuss those three specific items which were in the auditor's report.

I will suggest that it was you that looked at that and said: that is not enough to discuss; I wish to go further afield, further afield out of the year under review, further afield to politicize, as I indicated in my opening comments, in so far as your letter to the Public Accounts and to the media, in so far as your statements in the verbatim that said you were willing to allow it to go through until 1986 to discuss it, or the next year to discuss it. But, however, because of politics, you were afraid it would never be discussed.

I think we are missing the point here. The point here is that you had adequate opportunity to discuss the specifics of the auditor's concerns. And you determined that you didn't want to, in so far that moments later — and I will say moments later — you left the chamber. There wasn't even a legitimate nor appropriate motion for adjournment. There was no consideration given to the officials who were here, to thank them for appearing. There was no resolution whether Finance department was finished with or not, and everything was left up in the air.

I do not think members opposite can accuse us of muzzling the debate, of not following proper parliamentary procedure of debate; cannot accuse us of denying them the right to ask questions. The verbatim shows that it's there. And again I will remind you that we did not involve ourselves in any type of politicization regarding this issue.

Mr. Chairman: — No, I'll sure bet you didn't. I just want to say to clarify my position, you are right in one respect. The questioning which I wished to put to the witnesses from the Department of Finance goes beyond the issues raised by the Provincial Auditor's report — I want to make that clear. They are within the year under review but go beyond the narrow issue raised by the Provincial Auditor. As I pointed out earlier, our mandates are quite different. He is an auditor; we are elected members; and we have different roles.

Now the next person on my list is the member for Regina North West and then the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg.

Mr. Sveinson: — Well I'd just like to be brief. I think the member from Fairview outlined initially in his diatribe — I suppose that's one way to describe it — that this committee is not sitting to prevent future mistakes, or our role is . . . Maybe I misunderstood what you said . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, I just heard this in your recent discussion.

I think basically what the government here is doing, we're sitting today to cover past mistakes. And I think the role of this committee is to uncover and bring to the attention of the public those mistakes under the guide-lines of the committee.

And I think, reading this motion, that it's all-inclusive:

. . . the comptroller's statement regarding Pioneer Trust, this committee not consider the affairs of (the) same.

Now maybe I'm misunderstanding the motion, but it suggests that we don't consider the affairs of Pioneer Trust before this committee.

And it seems that the member from Regina South in the House recently indicated that, because of the constraining, I suppose, influence — and I'm not quoting him, but I just took this out of his statement — that many of these committees are no less than coffee klatches. You know, we function very efficiently until there's a political issue. And at that point the government, who certainly controls the committee — both this committee and the Crown Corporations Committee — pass a motion such as the one on the table today and that avoids the issue.

So, while I realize I've had some criticism for not attending the committee, I feel in most cases it's a little less than a coffee klatch. And in this case I think it should be open to discussion, whether it's by the chairman within the area he thinks he has a right to discuss, this Pioneer Trust, or whether it's from another angle.

If in fact it's not in the year under review, I think we'll all respect that and we'll go on to another area. But I think we should have the right to discuss, this committee, and basically the format of what happened under the year under review.

Mr. Engel: — I think we've had a very worthwhile debate on this topic this morning, Mr. Chairman. There's two points: one, do we limit the committee to the discussion according to the whims of the government, and accept motions that say we will "not consider the affairs of same," referring to Pioneer Trust; or do we limit the committee to the terms of reference that we discuss to conditions and incidents that led up to decisions the government made in the year under review?

I have no intention . . . I've never wanted to stretch the rules. Sometimes some questions overlap; sometimes some questions overlap and get close to a border, like Bill suggested — that he had a letter that was three days old and we're hamstrung by some of those rules, and I'll live by them.

But in this case here I believe that it's just a farce to sit on a Public Accounts Committee that only debates what the government likes to hear, and anything else I say I then am being political. I think that is what we're raising with this motion today — that this here will hamstring the committee and interfere in its use because it'll set a precedent.

Never in Public Accounts before has a government member ever . . . I challenge you to ever show where a government member has made a motion saying: we are not going to discuss topic XYZ under any terms, and that topic cannot be discussed even if it happened in the year under review. That's what this motion says here. And on that ground I stand strongly, that we should rescind that

motion because it gets at the very heart of what this Public Accounts Committee is here for.

I listened with keen interest to some of the members, and I saw Weiman bending a little bit. It looked like he was coming around and saying well, I'll let you talk about three specific investments. That's going a little ways.

But, Mr. Weiman, I want to tell you: you vote along to rescind this motion here or we don't have a Public Accounts Committee that's functioning like it has over the history. That is as simple as it is. Because we cannot be operating under terms of reference where you set some guide-lines and say, on this topic we will debate; on that one, not.

I think we've had a good airing of this. Everybody's had a free rule on it. Mr. Chairman, I think we should get to the motion.

Mr. Katzman: — Mr. Chairman, I have one comment.

Mr. Chairman: — Okay, one comment from the member for Rosthern. And then I'll . . .

Mr. Katzman: — I would correct Mr. Engel's comment and remind him, from '75-82, Mr. Randy Nelson and his little book about blocking things.

Mr. Engel: — Bring me a verbatim; I don't believe it.

Mr. Weiman: — I think that if we're going to bring this all to a head, I think the last comment by the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg has put it all in a nutshell when he stated that, either you vote for my motion or else there's no need for Public Accounts. I consider that nothing more than outright blackmail — outright blackmail. If we don't vote democratically . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Please do not interrupt the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Weiman: — If we don't vote democratically, as a motion that was placed last week, which was done so and passed by a majority, which was unacceptable to members opposite . . . And they're stating and you're stating very clearly: if you don't vote my way, as a minority — and I'm not saying as a minority in terms of party — as a minority in terms of people around this table, then there is no reason for Public Accounts, that it may as well close down. That is nothing than outright political blackmail.

For that matter, and I state it very clearly, Mr. Engel, if you feel that way about this Public Accounts, and you're not willing to abide by the rules of this committee and abide by the rules of the legislature and the parliamentary system, then perhaps you should not be on Public Accounts.

Mr. Chairman: — Well unless there's something . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay.

Mr. Engel: — May I ask the government members one question: do you consider the motion that Glauser made,

saying that we cannot talk about the affairs of public accounts even though the affairs happened in the year under review, do you consider that muzzling or don't you? Period. That's the question.

Mr. Glauser: — I have been very explicit in what I have said about discussing the year under review. The year under review is stated by the comptroller. It is further substantiated by the letter from the auditor that we received this morning, and on those two issues only that substantiates that motion that I made.

Mr. Chairman: — Okay, unless someone else has something . . .

Mr. Weiman: — Well yes, I wish to answer also because I seconded that motion.

Mr. Chairman: — Okay, you answer also.

Mr. Weiman: — You asked whether the right to be able to question things that are in the auditor's report is muzzling.

Mr. Engel: — No, no, no, I didn't. I asked whether I could question anything about Pioneer Trust of the Department of Finance for the year under review.

Mr. Weiman: — What I had stated is, for the year under review in terms of the auditor's report were three specific investments . . .

Mr. Engel: — That's not the question.

Mr. Weiman: — . . . for the Government of Saskatchewan. I have never denied you the right to discuss that or question it, and I'm on record of saying that. You are trying to twist that around.

Mr. Chairman: — All right, I'm going to call the question unless it's . . .

Mr. Sveinsson: — It effectively muzzles the discussion of Pioneer Trust; there's no question about that. I suggest to the members opposite that you've had a week to discuss it. I know the member from Fairview fairly well. I would think that reason occasionally should come to bear on your decision-making. And I think, as a reasonable man, you would certainly agree that this does muzzle the committee's ability to discuss this particular issue, Pioneer Trust.

And I don't think that the committee is structured to doubt your good reason. But I think with respect to yourself, after a week, after reviewing what the motion actually says, you will agree that effectively after this motion is passed, and it has been passed, that discussion of Pioneer Trust is muzzled.

Now you expand on that by offering a small offering that the committee can discuss, based on your own interpretation of where we should be going as a committee. But certainly seconding the motion in the first case — which I'm sure was plopped in front of you during a committee discussion and possibly discussed in caucus — a decision to come in here and muzzle this committee

on Pioneer Trust.

But I suggest that after a week that reason might prevail, and that your committee — and I know the member from Prince Albert to be a very reasonable man as well — and that the vote that we have on the amendment, maybe reason will prevail and we will, as a committee, be able to discuss an issue that is a burning political issue in Saskatchewan, rather than just getting together and having coffee on issues that are virtually meaningless. Because if we want to get into a political discussion on any of these issues, we're muzzled anyway. And this, you know, it certainly doesn't only happen in the committee; it happens in the House as well.

Mr. Chairman, one more question.

Mr. Chairman: — All right, these personal accusations do not . . .

Mr. Sveinsson: — I'm not . . . it's not an accusation; it's just a general question. I wasn't accusing the man of . . . I'm just suggesting that reason might have prevailed over the past week, and it appears that it hasn't prevailed. And possibly political pressures put on members of the committee will prevent us from further discussion of this burning political issue.

Mr. Chairman: — I'll recognize the member from Prince Albert, and then unless there's some strong objection I want to call a question on this thing.

Mr. Meagher: — Just a question of yourself, Mr. Chairman: that I wasn't present last week when this issue was last discussed, and I would like to know if you dealt with item 7 in Finance or did you simply walk out in a huff and not conclude the . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Let me assist the member from Prince Albert. Mr. Weiman said then, as he said now: "if you wish to discuss item 7," . . . Let me start back one previous quotation to put it in its context:

Mr. Chairman: — "On the basis of the comptroller's statement regarding Pioneer Trust, this committee not consider the affairs of (the) same." Signed, Mr. Glauser. Which somewhat, by the way, precludes any discussion of item 7 as well. I'm not sure that's what's intended, but that is what has been achieved.

Mr. Weiman: — If you wish to discuss item 7, which is your privilege, discuss item 7. And I'm sure that the member from Mayfair is willing to withhold his motion until item 7 has been discussed.

Mr. Glauser: — With all deference to my colleague from Fairview, that is not the intent of the motion, and I still stand with what I have moved.

Mr. Chairman: — The member from Mayfair doesn't want the matter discussed at all, period. That's the way your resolution reads.

Mr. Glauser: — That's . . . You're exactly correct because that just opens the door which is certainly not pertinent to the year under review, I still maintain, because this is still ongoing. It's just as my colleague, Mr. Klein, has said . . .

So I think there's no question about what Mr. Glauser intended. He stated himself with perfect clarity.

All those in favour of the motion? Opposed?

Negated

Mr. Chairman: — The motion is lost, four to three.

I have a brief statement I wish to make. I feel strongly enough about the issue, and I feel strongly enough about the function of this committee and its importance, and do not wish to carry on as chairman in light of this motion.

I am hereby tendering my resignation as chairman to the Clerk.

I've worked hard with this committee. I have tried to be fair to members and tried to encourage a full and unfettered range of discussion. I have encouraged witnesses to answer questions if it wasn't under the year under review. And we've done a good deal of that, although the rule was always there to be invoked if members felt it appropriate; and sometimes it was, as the member from North West indicated.

This, however, is a blatant attempt to muzzle this committee. I see it rearing its head again and again and again. I state the Department of Health, who have now been sent home — we've got some questions on them — is that going to be met with a similar gag order? I expect it would be.

I half agree with the member from Regina North West. If we're only going to discuss those items that the government feels are not embarrassing to them, then the committee serves little function.

I want to make it clear that for now I will remain a member of the committee. I will not, however, continue on as chairman.

Okay, move a motion of adjournment. All in favour? Agreed.

The committee adjourned at 11 a.m.