

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

February 10, 1989

Mr. Chairman: — I call the meeting to order. Before we commence, I believe Mr. Lutz has a statement that he wishes to make.

Mr. Lutz: — Mr. Chairman, I don't know exactly what *in camera* means. I wish my statement to be on the record. It doesn't matter to me who's in the room or not in the room. I just wish to make a statement.

Mr. Hopfner: — First you have to call the meeting to order in order to . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Yes, I've called it to order and the meeting is on the record. A transcript is being kept at this point.

Mr. Lutz: — Earlier in the week, Mr. Chairman, I made a statement to the members regarding comments attributed to me, and as a result of those comments and statement, and subsequent to that, I have the impression that there are still some reservations about my non-partisan position, so I wish to make this statement.

As an officer of the Assembly, it is essential that I enjoy the full confidence of the House in the performance of my duties. This confidence is obviously undermined if there is a perception by some hon. members that remarks attributed to me, and quoted out of context in the press, seem to display a partisan political bias.

I assure this committee that I have no such bias. I have already read to the committee the explanation of the intent of my comments to the press. These same concerns expressed in my comments to the press are contained in reports I have made to the legislature.

I have served the House as Provincial Auditor, and in the more junior position as deputy provincial auditor, since 1968, while each of the three major political parties in Canada have formed successive executive governments in the province.

I believe I have reported to the House all matters that I am required to report, impartially and without any consideration to which party held office. In doing so it falls on me in my reports to the House to be critical from time to time of the government of the day. During this period I have sought to avoid comment when approached by the press. One of the few occasions when I have spoken directly to them was recently, shortly before leaving on vacation, resulting in the report in the *Leader-Post* of January 23, 1989. I regret that I broke my own rule. I regret even more that the remarks attributed to me have been interpreted as being politically biased.

Accordingly, while denying any political bias, I apologize to this committee, and through you to all the hon. members of the Legislative Assembly for my indiscretion.

Thank you for the time, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: — Thank you, Mr. Lutz.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to

thank Mr. Lutz for making the apology. And on behalf of myself who moved the motion, I want to say thank you, and I accept it graciously.

Mr. Chairman: — Thank you, Mr. Martens.

Mr. Neudorf: — I too, Mr. Chairman, would like to go on record as accepting completely Mr. Lutz's apology and explanation. As far as I'm concerned, the matter can be considered closed.

Mr. Martin: — I'd like to make it unanimous on this side of the table.

Mr. Hopfner: — Maybe, Mr. Chairman, if I may, if it's the will of the chairman, maybe what you could express through some sort of . . . as a group, as a committee, that we have accepted the statement of the primary auditor.

Mr. Chairman: — Well, we've had a statement by the auditor. The only motion I have on the books is the one of February 7 in this respect, and that is that the committee report to the Legislative Assembly that the remarks made by the Provincial Auditor to the press, the *Leader-Post* January 23, 1989, be addressed to determine whether the Provincial Auditor in his remarks made comments of a partisan political nature.

That's the only motion on the books in this respect.

Mr. Hopfner: — No, I mean something unanimous so it's on record that there was a unanimous acceptance of his statement that he's just made.

Mr. Chairman: — Well, you can make a motion to that effect.

Mr. Hopfner: — All right. let's so move then:

That this committee unanimously accepts the statement of the primary auditor.

Mr. Chairman: — So the motion is that the committee accepts unanimously the statement of the auditor.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Or accepts the apology, that's all.

Mr. Chairman: — Accepts the apology of the auditor. Is that how you wish it worded?

A Member: — Sure.

Mr. Neudorf: — Should there be some reference in terms of what the apology was for on that motion?

A Member: — It's in his statement.

Mr. Chairman: — We have the motion. All those in favour? Opposed?

Agreed

Mr. Hopfner: — Is that an abstaining . . .

A Member: — The vote's unanimous.

Mr. Neudorf: — Is that on record then that it's unanimous? Because I noticed that some members were not raising their hands.

Ms. Ronyk: — That was in the wording of the motion.

Mr. Neudorf: — What does it mean then, in your interpretation, if there's a vote being taken and a member does not raise his hand at all?

Ms. Ronyk: — Mr. Chairman told me to say that it was unanimous, so I wasn't watching. I don't know. Whatever the judgement of the chair is.

Mr. Chairman: — We have this motion. Do you wish to leave the other motion then on the books? You want to leave the other one on the books. Okay.

Having dealt with that matter we agreed yesterday at 4:30 that we would meet *in camera*. We will need a motion to in fact meet *in camera*. We are not meeting *in camera* now; we're meeting in public, even though the press may be under the impression that we're not actually meeting *in camera* right now and we're not, so we will need a motion to that effect.

Mr. Neudorf: — I would move:

That we at this point go *in camera*, Mr. Chairman, and that it be unanimously agreed to.

Mr. Chairman: — We have a motion that we meet *in camera* and it be unanimously agreed to. All those in favour? Opposed?

Agreed

Mr. Chairman: — The next question is, do you wish a transcript to be kept of the proceedings at this point? Would someone make a motion, then, that a transcript not be kept at this point.

Mr. Prebble: — Sure, for the sake of facilitating . . . that motion can always be reversed if the need arises.

Mr. Chairman: — Yes, at any point we can decide to change any of those things as a committee. It's moved by Mr. Prebble:

That transcripts not be taken at this point.

All those in favour of the motion? Opposed?

Agreed

Mr. Lutz: — Ms. Ronyk tells me that the verbatim will probably not be ready for two weeks, so I would like to present to the committee a copy of my statement. I had them made during the break.

Mr. Chairman: — We're back to discussion on the motion by Mr. Neudorf, which was:

That the committee immediately proceed to hearings on the mandate of the Public Accounts

Committee.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to discuss this issue a little bit further here, subject to the events that have occurred thus far this morning. And subject to those events, I would like to take this opportunity to withdraw my previous motion which is on the floor now. It was moved by myself and seconded by my colleague, Harold Martens. And so at this point I would ask leave of the committee for me to make that withdrawal.

Mr. Chairman: — Is leave granted? Agreed.

Agreed

Mr. Neudorf: — Having being given permission by the committee to withdraw my motion, I would like to replace that motion by making the following motion. seconded by my colleague, Mr. Michael Hopfner:

That the committee agreed to following operating procedures:

1. Political partisan discussion is to be excluded from the questioning of witnesses.
2. Subsequent to questioning the witnesses, there will be a motion to deal with concluding the hearing of that department, subject to recall.
3. Political partisan debate may occur only after the above motion is presented.
4. Role of Chairperson: The chairperson is to move out of the chair to make any partisan political statements on the motion.
5. The Public Accounts Committee will call departmental witnesses for the 1986-87 Public Accounts, beginning on March 14, 1989, and will meet regularly thereafter on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
6. The agenda for the hearings will be determined by the chairman and vice-chairman.
7. The committee will provide a recommendation to the Assembly for a mandate review process.

That is the text, Mr. Chairman, of the motion that I would make to the committee at this time.

Mr. Chairman: — Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. Moved by Mr. Neudorf. Any discussion on the motion? It was seconded by . . .

Mr. Neudorf: — I did read in that my colleague, Michael Hopfner, was the seconder of that motion.

Mr. Martin: — Did he mention in 5 the time of 8:30 a.m.?

Mr. Neudorf: — Yes, Mr. Martin, and Mr. Chairman. I

hesitated while I was reading that because it . . . I seem to recollect that we had agreed that we would be meeting at 8:30 in the mornings, so perhaps with concurrence of the committee I will include that in my point no. 5, where I read:

. . . will meet regularly thereafter on Tuesdays and Thursdays, beginning at 8.30 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: — Yes, it's agreed that that forms part of the motion, as opposed to 7 a.m. or some other time.

Okay, it's been moved by Mr. Neudorf, seconded by Mr. Hopfner. Is there discussion on the motion? Ready for the question? All those in favour? Opposed? It's carried.

Agreed

Mr. Chairman: — That, as I understand it then, concludes the outstanding items before the committee at this time, and it's been moved by Mr. Martin that we adjourn. All agreed? Agreed.

The committee adjourned at 12:55 p.m.