

Lougheed defends briefing in Hawaii

By CHERYL COHEN
Journal Staff Writer

Premier Peter Lougheed says he isn't the only Tory MLA privileged to get briefing material hand-delivered in far-off places.

The premier told the house Wednesday that his \$1,500 briefing while holidaying in Hawaii last month falls in line with a normal practice which he plans to continue.

And later, when asked if this privilege extends to cabinet ministers, he said:

"It depends on the magnitude of it. If

you have to get material to him, then it has to be done. You see, people have to be well briefed on their assignments."

In the house, Opposition MLA Ray Martin (NDP—Edmonton Norwood) asked Lougheed to confirm that press secretary Ron Leipert had flown to Hawaii at a cost to taxpayers of about \$1,500.

"Yes," said Lougheed. "This is a practice that I've used on many occasions when I require documents and a briefing. In almost every case I ask a member of my staff to come and bring a fairly large

briefcase, and review the briefcase with me."

Lougheed said that, in the Hawaiian example, he had just finished a five-week Orient business trip and wanted a full briefing of events he had missed in Alberta.

"I do this every year at least once or twice. And I'll continue to do it because I think the people of this province want their leader of government to know what's going on."

When Opposition Leader Grant Notley asked whether the Tory government has considered adopting the

prime minister's practice of using confidential Telexes instead of hand deliveries, Lougheed said the Hawaiian briefing material would have made a Telex "about a hundred miles long."

Martin was cut down by Speaker Gerry Amerongen when he tried to mention "this time of restraint" and hospital-user fees in the same breath as the briefing.

Amerongen said the question about the briefing trip was questionable in itself for Question Period, because it was "not an urgent matter."

Darts and bouquets

To the province, for wasting taxpayers' money by spending \$1,500 to deliver briefing documents to Premier Lougheed on a Hawaiian holiday last week. Air cargo delivery would have cost \$35; a two-hour phone call to transmit them, around \$140. Instead, press secretary Ron Liepert hopped a jet in Edmonton and flew with the papers to hand them to the premier. Too confidential to send by air cargo, said a spokesman, and besides, customs would be a problem. Not so, says CP Air; customs is no difficulty.

So this is what they mean by spending restraint.

Briefs' trip to Hawaii cost \$1,500

By CHERYL COHEN
Journal Staff Writers

It cost Alberta taxpayers about \$1,500 to brief their vacationing premier last week.

Ron Liepert, Lougheed's press secretary, flew to Hawaii to hand-deliver documents, on instructions from executive Lougheed aide Bob Giffin. The Journal has learned.

Edmonton-Honolulu information exchanges can cost as low as \$35, for air cargo delivery of seven kilograms of documents, or between \$84.10 and \$168.20 for a two-hour phone call.

But Giffin, executive director in Lougheed's office, maintained Monday the documents involved were of such a "confidential nature" they had to be hand delivered.

Air cargo was out because "it's not the sort of material that I would want misplaced anywhere and somebody to pick up and read it," said Giffin.

He added "there's no way" of getting confidential documents through customs using air cargo.

But a CP Air spokesman told The Journal there would have been problems only if the material were illegal or pornographic, and that confidential business documents frequently travel by air cargo.

Giffin also said the information could not have been passed on over the phone.

He wouldn't divulge what the documents were about, but said there were "a lot of important matters, important documents" which Lougheed needed briefing on before the "important meetings" that face him this week.

Lougheed, who holidayed in Hawaii for a week at the end of his five-week business trip to the Orient, is scheduled to hold talks with two prime ministers — Pierre Trudeau and Britain's Margaret Thatcher — in the next few days.

Giffin said Lougheed had requested the material Liepert delivered. "And I was the one that made the decision as to the how."

Liepert said there was no way he would have paid for the trip himself — "If I'm going to pay to go to Hawaii, I'm not going to go for two days and fly for two days."

Conservatives let it hang out at Elzinga fund-raiser roast

By CHERYL COHEN
Journal Staff Writer

Volleys of dinner rolls and hiccups punctuated speeches as Alberta's better-heeled Tories gathered for a federal party fund-raiser in Edmonton.

The Tories were letting it all hang out at a \$125-a-plate dinner and celebrity "roast" — ostensibly of federal party president Peter Elzinga, whose outstanding presidency-campaign expenses were to be met by some of the \$50,000 raised.

But Elzinga wasn't the only target as members of the roasting platform — including Mayor Cec Purves and federal Tory House Leader Erik Nielsen — got going this weekend:

- Diner Ron Liepert, Premier Peter Lougheed's press secretary, was welcomed "on one of his flying visits" by master of ceremonies Don Percy, of CFRN Radio.

The 400-member audience roared as Percy, teasing Liepert about his recent \$1,500-trip to Hawaii to deliver briefing material to Lougheed, continued: "He has to leave early to deliver some mail to Hong Kong."