

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, December 18, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Tenth report of Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs—Mr. Jerome.

[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Eighth report of Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development—Mr. Buchanan.

[Editor's note: For text of above reports, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

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FINANCE

TABLING OF AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 1973

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I should like to table, pursuant to Standing Order 41(2), the report of the Auditor General for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1973.

I wonder whether on behalf of my colleague and seat-mate, the President of the Treasury Board, we could not ask for the unanimous consent of the House to send the Auditor General's report to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Speaker: Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

STATEMENT ON GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS AND ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTEES

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in my statement on July 18, 1973, concerning conflict of interest, I outlined standards of conduct which would apply to cabinet ministers. On July 17 my colleague, the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), had earlier announced government policy concerning Members

of Parliament and Senators and indicated that it was his intention to refer the government's green paper to a standing committee. The Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections has been heavily involved with other matters, as the House knows, until now. However, it is my understanding that the President of the Privy Council may be able to move that the green paper be referred to that committee this week. I know that members will give this matter very careful attention when the motion for the reference is taken up in the House and, later, in the committee.

In July I also indicated that the government was actively considering the proper steps to be taken with regard to the public service and those appointed to various offices by the Governor General in Council. I wish today to announce the government's policy in that regard.

Canada can take pride in her public service and in the individuals who serve within it. In any large organization, however, it may be necessary from time to time to give direction as to the manner in which people must conduct themselves in the course of their employment. In these matters it is as much a benefit to the employee as it is to the employer to have clear standards apply.

The government believes that in setting standards it is important not only to protect the public interest adequately but also to protect the rights of those who are affected by the standards. We have opted, Mr. Speaker, for a series of guidelines which have been incorporated in an Order in Council covering all employees in the public service which, with the permission of the House, I now table.

Central to our policy is the principle that it is not sufficient for a public servant merely to act within the law. We believe that there is an obligation to act in a manner so scrupulous that it will bear the closest public scrutiny. Public servants, therefore, must not place themselves in a position where they are under obligation to any person who might benefit from special consideration or favour on their part or seek in any way to gain special treatment from them. Equally, a public servant must not have a pecuniary interest that could conflict in any manner with the discharge of his official duties. Public servants will be expected, as are ministers of the Crown, upon appointment to office, to arrange their private affairs in a manner that will prevent conflicts of interest from arising if there is any risk of that occurring.

Public servants are being asked to exercise care in the management of their private affairs so as not to benefit, or appear to benefit, from the use of information acquired in the course of their official duties that is not generally available to the public. In matters of contract, public servants must not place themselves in a position where they could derive any direct or indirect benefit or interest from a government contract over which they can influence decisions. Regarding outside employment, public servants