

Public Accounts

peculiar position through no fault of his or anybody else's. The facts of Canadian party life just have worked out that way now for half a century.

I do hope the committee that is appointed for this year will give more serious consideration to those statements. There are so very few really effective and potent weapons available to an opposition party under the kind of system and statutes we have, which permit the government the right to operate in so many cases by Order in Council. To meet the vast forces of government and its supporting bureaucracy, we must have an official like the Auditor General working with a reinforced committee such as the Public Accounts committee.

Finally I have two more quotations from page 9 of the same issue. The first one reads:

This raises the question—which I presume will come up again later but I want to make sure that I put it on the record now because I wish to say something about it—whether or not the Auditor General should simply confine himself to commenting on the legality or otherwise of expenditures or whether he should get himself involved in commenting on what is in effect policy from the point of view of the government.

I pause here because this is the crux of the argument which has developed between the cabinet on the one side and the Auditor General on the other. I am convinced that the two ministers whose names I used, or whose positions are used, did not speak out as they did in criticism of the Auditor General and his role without having behind them the full support of the government and the Prime Minister.

I think the words of Professor Ward must be engraved on the hearts of the members of the committee when they come to examine this problem. What are the functions of the Auditor General? Must he be confined within strict terms, as has been suggested by ministers on the other side, or should he have a degree of freedom which permits him an opportunity to go into other matters, which I submit is so essential? Let me continue with what Professor Ward said:

My general position on this, which I really have held for many years, is that there is no conceivable way in which you could limit an Auditor General to commenting only on the legality of expenditures—none. The reason I say that is that it is his duty, clearly, to report what he considers are extravagant or improvident expenditures.

I pause here to say what a great field he has when he serves with the gentlemen who sit opposite us. Then, to continue:

But they could be perfectly legal. I could be paid by the government \$1,000 for \$1,000 worth of work quite legally, but under the same kind of contract I could be paid \$5,000 for doing \$1,000 worth of work and it would be perfectly legal—and I think, it would be the duty of the Auditor General to point out that I had in fact been paid five times as much as the job is worth.

Just as simple as that in those clearly expressed terms, Professor Ward has pointed out the nub of the problem regarding the conflict between the government and the Auditor General. When we see the committee bring in recommendations, as they obviously attempted to do, which would take the government side, then I think

[Mr. Baldwin.]

probably—I will not say there was a hatchet job because I think I would not be right in saying that—it is time to take stock. There were a few times when the committee obviously attempted, through government members, to carry forward the views of the then President of the Privy Council and to incorporate them in the terms of the recommendations of the committee.

I would like to see the committee review this, too, and the other evidence which was given last June. By reviewing and changing some of those recommendations in light of the clear warning uttered by Professor Ward, they would show themselves to be honourable and distinguished Members of Parliament.

• (2:40 p.m.)

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a question.

Mr. Baldwin: Delighted.

Mr. Cafik: I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee, and I gather the hon. member is referring to the recommendation in respect of a new Auditor General's act. I may be wrong, and if so the hon. gentleman will correct me, but as I recall it those recommendations in the committee were passed unanimously by all members on the committee. I suggest that if there is any criticism of those recommendations, that criticism I presume would apply to the members of his party as well as to other members.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I have never been an obsequious member of this House. If members on our side of the House in my judgment are mistaken, I would have no hesitation in saying so. This is a policy I would recommend to members opposite. It would be much better if members on the other side would stand up and criticize the government, especially when there is so much to criticize.

The quotation continues:

I hasten to add that this never has happened. But it could happen perfectly legally and it would certainly, I think in a case like that, still be the duty of the Auditor General, whether it was legal or not, to comment on what seemed to him to be an improvident expenditure.

I think this is extremely important, Mr. Speaker. I am just about finished. I hope I have excited other hon. members to get up and defend themselves and contribute to this very important debate which I believe is of great consequence to the people of this country who are saddled with a heavy burden of taxes which will become even greater if the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) has his way. Then, there is this paragraph on page 10:

I do not really know of any way either in which you can prevent the Auditor General from straying over, sometimes at least, even inadvertently, into the field of policy, because policy nowadays is not that clear-cut a thing that you can distinguish the purely financial aspect of policy from policy itself. One only has to consider for example how many of our major expenditures of government today—this again is very unlike the way things were in 1878—are substantive expenditures, like the family allowance, in which the actual administrative cost