

tigators swooped down on Mr. Buchanan, seized records dealing with his income tax returns and his personal files, ostensibly to do an audit of his tax returns.

I quote from the *Montreal Gazette* of December 20, 1975:

On May 4, 1972, Otto Lang as minister of justice and attorney general, moved through the courts to quash the Anti-Dumping Tribunal's glass case decision of two years earlier.

The government alleged that Mr. Buchanan had a conflict of interest in this instance. The article goes on as follows:

The justice department's file on Buchanan was relayed to John Turner, then minister, of finance and the cabinet minister responsible for Buchanan's tribunal. Turner asked for his resignation, effective immediately.

Buchanan complied.

Subsequently this case was taken to the Supreme Court of Canada where it was thrown out by a unanimous decision. Chief Justice Laskin, who wrote the decision, pointed out it was a travesty that should not have been allowed to take place.

Perhaps I could call it ten o'clock, Mr. Speaker. I would like to renew this at a later date.

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## PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

### GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION—REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE STUDY OF ALL GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED-CORPORATIONS

**Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, we have all watched with varying degrees of astonishment the investigations of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts into AECL's foreign dealings—astonishment that such secretive and expensive tactics are needed to lose money on reactor sales, and astonishment that a Crown corporation could operate in such a loose and arbitrary fashion. While we all respect the independence of Crown corporations we must also respect the concept of value for public money, no matter what the status of the agency through which that money is dispensed.

We can be thankful that parliament has an Auditor General with the resources to tell us when something in the system has gone badly wrong, and we sorely need a comptroller general to catch as many potential difficulties as possible before they occur. But for parliament the information supplied by the Auditor General is of little use unless there exists a suitable means of delving into his findings or complementing them with committee hearings.

We have the Public Accounts Committee to allow us to discuss the Auditor General's report, but that committee is not, as it should be, in any position to support the Auditor General in a concrete way, or to provide a forum which will

### *Adjournment Debate*

add to the public's knowledge and understanding. At present the committee's scope seems to be limited by the degree of co-operation exhibited by those being examined and that is more likely to lead to farce than fact. What use is it to a committee of the House if the head of a Crown corporation or a department simply says, this when things get a bit hot, that he does not feel able to release or give the requested information?

I therefore asked the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) if additional powers could be considered for the Public Accounts committee, and received the usual vague brush-off. It should not be as easy as it is now to refuse information to a committee of this House. The Public Accounts Committee should have full powers to call for persons and papers, and there should be an obligation for those persons and papers to be produced.

● (2200)

If documents or testimony involved in a hearing are of a confidential nature, the sessions should be in camera with the minutes of proceedings edited. Committees at Westminster dealing with confidential or secret information sometimes do this. If co-operation is not forthcoming the committee should be able to report to the House, as it can now, but with a guarantee that its report will be speedily and decisively dealt with. The government could still side against the committee as must be its ultimate right, but it would have to do so openly and could not frustrate the committee by inertia.

It would also assist the Public Accounts Committee if the Public Accounts contained more corporate data and a summary of it, as suggested by the Auditor General in paragraph 5.24 of his 1976 report.

We should also devise a better method of examining witnesses to permit proper cross-examination, and the chairman should be empowered to chop off time-wasting and irrelevant answers. The committee has too much to do in a short time to permit a witness to be deliberately long-winded. Moreover, it is a committee with unique responsibilities to parliament and to Canada.

In answering me on Monday, the Prime Minister talked about "the traditions of our parliamentary system". It is marvelous the way spokesmen for government are able to laud the flexibility of the parliamentary system when they want to rewrite the rules to eliminate the rights of opposition parties, but are able to propound inviolable principles and conjure up threats of congressional republicanism when their own infallibility and authority might be questioned. No doubt we are about to hear more of this bunk from the parliamentary secretary. God knows, it should be obvious that if parliament is to remain even as relevant as it is now, my proposal which I intend to advance formally to the government House leader, at the suggestion of the Prime Minister, is not excessive. It is in keeping with the best traditions of parliament in an age that is becoming more complicated and difficult. I want the government to be more forthcoming.