

In view of that recommendation on page 74 of the report of the Chief Electoral Officer for 1983, is it the intention of the Prime Minister and his Government, as a matter of public policy, to re-examine that clause?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Hon. Member agrees with my previous answer. Of course, the complaint by the Citizens' Coalition was not against that aspect of the law which dealt with editorials. It is as well to remind them that there remains freedom of speech in this country. Anyone can get up and oppose any Party and any Member in any way. It is just that he cannot use the power of money, once again, to give him an advantage over other candidates.

The Hon. Member asks a specific question about something contained in the report of the Chief Electoral Officer which, the House Leader informs me, has just been tabled. I think we should do what the usual process calls for. In other words, that report should be referred, and it is referred automatically, to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

If the Hon. Member has some concerns I am sure he will express them, along with other colleagues who might have other concerns on other matters. I think it is good that we have the occasion in the House today, as we did yesterday, when Members on this side indicated the spirit of the law and of that amendment, to reaffirm the intention that all parties had in supporting that amendment.

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CROWN CORPORATIONS

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS—GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister as it concerns the actions of three of his Ministers. The Minister of Transport recently fired the Auditor General from his position as auditor of the newly named Canada Ports Corporation. The Minister responsible for Canada Post fired the Auditor General from the Canada Post Corporation after 100 years of experience of doing that and reporting to Parliament. When the Minister of Finance was Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, he fired the Auditor General from Eldorado Nuclear Limited, about three months before that Crown corporation became insolvent.

The whole country is anticipating legislation that will give more accountability to Crown corporations. Is it now the policy of the Government that Parliament should get less accountability by removing its servant, the Auditor General, as auditor of these Crown corporations?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member has been misled by reading some editorials on the subject. He will know that the Canada Ports Corporation is a new Crown corporation which was just created. It is therefore not a matter of firing the Auditor General, who could not have had the job before because the corporation

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did not have the job before. It is a matter of setting up a new corporation under the authority of the laws of Parliament and appointing an auditor to it. We have appointed an auditor who is from an independent firm, and who, I believe, works for many, many respectable governments, corporations, and parties.

● (1500)

The Hon. Member opposite talks about patronage. I would ask him to ask his own leader whether Touche Ross do not and have not worked for corporations, and have not been appointed by the Tory Party. He will find, on the contrary, that they have a very heavy contract in that direction.

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DISARMAMENT

LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER FROM U.S.S.R. HEAD OF STATE

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister and concerns media reports, and a press release just handed to me, with respect to a communication which he has received from Soviet Leader, Yuri Andropov, in reply to his request for a meeting. I am wondering whether the Prime Minister could elaborate on this matter and share with us the views concerning this letter. Does he intend to make it public? Further, can he give us his views as to the possibilities of arranging such a meeting in the near future?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I believe the essence of the letter was in reply to a suggestion that sometime next week, or before the end of the month, I would be prepared to travel to Moscow, and if I could not meet with Mr. Andropov I would be happy to meet with any other ministers or officials among the leadership which he would designate. The essence of his answer was to indicate to me that he preferred that I meet with himself personally and he asked me to be patient, that he hoped to be able to discuss dates with me in the not too distant future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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PETITIONS

TABLING OF REPORT OF CLERK OF PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the petition presented by the Hon. Member for Guelph (Mr. Schroder), by filing with the Clerk of the House on Wednesday, January 18, 1984, meets the requirement of the Standing Orders as to form.