

*Auditor General Act*

receipts were not maintained. If they had been, parliament would never have known about it. Presumably, under the new Auditor General Act, the auditor general could now include reference to payments such as those in his report to the House, no matter what receipts were on hand, by questioning the efficiency and effectiveness of the spending.

Where does this leave the parliament of Canada and the committee system, Mr. Speaker? We are back to square one. The auditor general has more power to comment on the expenditure of funds which in his view may not be spent in an effective manner, than the committee has to get to the root of the problem. The committee has not been strengthened at all. All it can do is study the report, hear the government's witnesses and balance the two views before coming to a decision.

The AECL hearings were stonewalled. We were not given complete information, nor were we able to call the witnesses we desired or required. Our work was, therefore, ineffective and incomplete.

**Miss MacDonald:** And the minister did not answer questions.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** The minister had frequent lapses of memory about approval of capital budgets and other things. That the committee did not do a good job of looking into the AECL fiasco is no reflection upon its members, but is the result of a hopelessly inadequate committee system. The government continues to refer to the committee system in glowing terms, but if it is to be an effective tool of this parliament it must be improved and upgraded. It is a sorry situation when the press have more resources than the committee system. They did a much better job of checking into the AECL matter than the committee, because they had more resources, more money, more time. Passage of this bill will not improve the committee system, Mr. Speaker. We may find out about more nefarious practices, but we will still have no way of getting to the root of the problem and finding out what actually transpired.

The government's abuse of the \$1 vote is another example of how parliamentary control is being destroyed. During the committee proceedings on Bill C-20 we attempted to have an amendment passed that would allow the auditor general to comment on money spent for purposes other than that for which it was originally appropriated. Treasury Board turned the amendment down on the grounds that this bill was not the proper vehicle for discouraging the use of \$1 votes. What is the proper vehicle, Mr. Speaker? There were 52 \$1 vote items, some of which Your Honour found to be out of order. Some had to come back in the form of legislation.

As far as I am concerned, and as far as this government is concerned, there is no proper vehicle for restoring the authority of parliament. But it must be restored, Mr. Speaker. Parliament is becoming more and more of a nuisance to this government. To realize this we just have to look at the form and content of the estimates and the way they are handled; at the \$1 vote items; at the weak forecasting of expenditures and

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

the use of supplementary estimates; at the guillotine rule; at the powerless committees. There can be no doubt about this government's intentions, and the passage of the Auditor General Act does nothing to change things. The government is in a sorry state.

**Mr. Oberle:** Innocent ignorance.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** We look at Crown corporations and—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I have to interrupt the hon. member as his time has expired. The special order which was adopted to extend the hours of sitting, at the same time limited speeches to 30 minutes. The hon. member would require unanimous consent to continue. Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member to complete his remarks?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I shall try not to abuse the privilege. I want to conclude by saying the spending programs of the government have grown astronomically. We have a situation where Crown corporations have become kingdoms unto themselves. I am happy that the minister is going to look into this situation very closely. Let there be no doubt that Bill C-20 will not do the job of clearing up the mess of government mismanagement and improper parliamentary control.

It seems to me we should be looking at two or three areas that would help us, as parliamentarians, to examine the spending practices and habits of the government. I think we should consider the possibility of establishing some form of independent review agency to appraise and evaluate ongoing government programs and consider alternative ways of operating those programs more efficiently and effectively. There should be an accurate appraisal of cost-benefit analysis of existing programs. Surely it is time we considered initiating some of the concepts of zero-base budgeting. Perhaps we should start with a few selected Crown corporations or government agencies and later extend it to other areas. The incremental budget process which has been used over the past few years has been a disaster.

● (1730)

I note in the *Globe and Mail* that the President of the United States has mandated that the federal budget for fiscal 1979 will use zero-base budgeting. In addition, it is stated that 11 states have adopted zero-base budgeting, more than ten cities are trying it out, and major companies have applied it to some of their operations. It is time we seriously considered the concept of zero-base budgeting. It is still a relatively new theme. There are a number of seminars and conferences on this very important subject. We should get on with the job.

As well, we should consider very seriously establishing a permanent joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons to deal solely with the Crown corporations in this country. The committee should be composed of a permanent membership and should conduct itself in a non-partisan