

Victoria Hospital to proceed instead of stone-walling in the House and calling me stupid?

In Langley, British Columbia, tax collectors seized \$37 from the bank account of an eleven-year-old boy because his parents could not come up with the money which Revenue Canada said they owed. The boy's father suffered a nervous breakdown because of the harassment by those officials. Who is stupid, Mr. Speaker?

● (1815)

In 1982, William Rowe, a St. John's lawyer, was appointed to report on the alleged heavy-handed techniques of tax officials in Newfoundland who were demanding that fishermen sell their houses to pay off assessments, and were threatening to garnishee the wages of fish plant workers. Rowe recommended that Revenue Canada clean up its act. He noted that the Department's search and seizure powers may be an infringement of the Bill of Rights. He called for a special task force to investigate these charges. The Rowe Report was neither published nor acted upon. Had it been, the present controversy could have been avoided. Who is stupid, Mr. Speaker?

The 1983 edition of *Inside Taxation*, a Revenue Canada publication, says that the mandate of the Department is to maintain public confidence in the integrity of the tax system by administering tax and related legislation fairly, uniformly and courteously. I ask you to talk to some of the people who have been inside Revenue Canada offices lately on tax matters. It states further that a self-assessment system can work only when taxpayers readily comply with the law.

Revenue Canada, Taxation, recognizes the importance of maintaining public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of such a system. How does the Minister meet these commitments? By adopting a hard line approach to the administration of the Act. This has left a trail of angry taxpayers who feel there is no such thing as justice and fair play when it comes to dealing with the Department. His aggressive and confrontational style has replaced reliance on dialogue and negotiation as an approach to problem solving. The Minister's response to mounting public criticism of his Department has been to ignore the problem. We have seen him operate this way in the House for six months. Who is stupid, Mr. Speaker? I ask you: who is stupid?

After defending the heavy-handed tactics of his Deputy Minister for six months, the Minister then fired him in an attempt to deflect criticism of the Department. Who is stupid? When the Opposition called for a full parliamentary inquiry into Revenue Canada, the Minister spent \$1.5 million to hire Mr. Farlinger to conduct an in-house study, not a public inquiry. The Minister thinks that throwing a cloak of secrecy around his Department's operations is the way to satisfy public discontent. Ignore the problem and it will go away. Again, who is stupid?

Incidentally, 80 per cent of my constituents who responded to a questionnaire in my Spring Householder declared themselves in favour of our demand for a full public inquiry. We set

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up a task force and we listened to the people of Canada. In far less time and at much less cost than Mr. Farlinger we made 76 recommendations designed to make the tax system more fair, more accountable and more effective. Our task force set out to correct an injustice, one the current Government seems prepared to ignore. To make it even more ludicrous, Mr. Turner, who would lead the Liberal Party, supports the report of the Progressive Conservative Task Force in its entirety. Who is stupid?

The Royal Victoria Hospital affair is indicative of the Revenue Canada approach that so many Canadians have become so fed up with. Why does the Minister not intervene in this case, as he did in the case of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and reverse the decision of his Mr. Robert Young? Why does he not encourage fund raising in the private sector? What does he have against private money at a time when we are spending billions of dollars on medicare? I know this is a concept foreign to this Government which likes to get its hands into every segment of the economy and society—state control. But it would be a great thing to do and it is so simple.

The Minister is also responsible for customs and excise. The Hon. Member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) brought up in the House today the matter of an American hockey team which came to Canada and exchanged pins. They went to Customs and were charged \$72 in duty. They came up here to play hockey with Canadians and the Government made us look ridiculous in the eyes of our largest trading partner.

Being called stupid by that Minister, given the events I have described, does not bother me. Coming from him it is really not offensive. But my constituents deserve better treatment from his Department and from this Government. I hope Revenue Canada will smarten up in a hurry.

**Mr. W. Kenneth Robinson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to respond to the Hon. Member in terms of who is stupid or who is not stupid. I do not think it is relevant to what we are talking about today. It is certainly not relevant to the matter which he has raised, and did raise, in his question of May 14, 1984.

● (1820)

I am responding to the question raised at that time by the Hon. Member for Simcoe South (Mr. Stewart) concerning the Royal Victoria Hospital of Barrie Foundation and the Department's refusal to allow tax deductions for payments of \$500 made to the Foundation by taxpayers in exchange for a copy of a print of a painting by the Canadian artist, Ken Danby. The Hon. Member also seems to feel that the Department's position discriminates against hospitals in their fundraising campaigns. This is just not so.

In the matter at hand regarding the Royal Victoria Hospital of Barrie, I would like to point out that the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Bussières) is precluded by the confidentiality provisions of the Income Tax Act from discussing the particulars of the Department's dealings with this organi-