

every employee in my present Department that in no way were they to be permitted to speak to Conservative Members of Parliament on the PC task force on Revenue Canada.

Mr. Gauthier: That is nonsense. Prove it.

Mr. Beatty: In a few moments the Member for Ottawa-Vanier will be rising as a born-again advocate of open government. But his constituents and the people of Canada have the right to ask him where he was a few months ago and where was his commitment to open government at a time when Canadians were asking for factual information with regard to Revenue Canada. He sat there mute or he defended the policies of the previous government.

On September 4, Canadians asked for a change. They said that they had to put an end to this sort of abuse and bring a new government to office that was prepared to open up. In dealing with my Department, Revenue Canada—the same Department that had a gag order on it before—if he wants to get factual information, as the task force did, he can feel free to do so and to request the information. Indeed, I am here daily in Question Period. My officials are under instructions to provide factual information.

That was precisely the point of the guidelines that were issued in the past few days. It was to say on behalf of the Government that we recognize that there is access to information legislation—which we were finally able to press the Liberals into passing—which gives a statutory right to Canadians and Members of Parliament to have information. It was a right that was systematically denied them in consistent cover-ups by the Liberal administration.

Mr. Nunziata: Not this Party.

Mr. Beatty: We are saying that it is not simply a matter of the Government not passing the sort of gag orders the Liberals had on the uranium cartel and not systematically covering up, but that the new administration has the responsibility to communicate effectively and take its message to the Canadian people.

That is why I addressed 2,000 tax practitioners in Toronto recently to talk to them about the reforms we are introducing in our Department to make it more accessible and open to Canadian citizens. I was the first Minister of Revenue in recent memory who had even gone to the Canadian Tax Foundation to be available to them. The tax practitioners who were present found this extraordinary because they were not used to having someone from the federal government listen and communicate. The Hon. Members opposite with their constant barracking are attempting to shout down a Minister of the Crown who is attempting to give information.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Beatty: They talk about freedom of information and cover-up, yet when a Member on the government side attempts to give information, they attempt to shout him down. This is

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exactly the same policy they followed when they were on this side of the House.

Mr. Boudria: If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.

Mr. Beatty: Our Government is committed to opening up government and providing information to Canadians. We are committed to ending the cover-ups of recent years and to cutting back on federal advertising that was designed simply as puffery to polish the image of the Party in power.

We are also committed to communicating effectively to Canadians the policies which are designed to serve their needs. One of the goals in the guidelines and in the letters sent to Ministers and deputy ministers in the past few days was to say that it is time to communicate far more effectively with Canadians in the regions.

For example, when dealing with my Department in the future, I want Canadians throughout Canada to feel free to contact the district offices to get information on a factual and timely basis. I believe that our Department has an obligation to solicit the views of Canadians and provide information to them as fully and factually as possible.

It is a dramatic change from the policies that have been followed by Revenue Canada in recent years. We saw that the Liberal government shut the public out.

The Hon. Members in the back row were not here during the controversy of the past year. If they were, they would have noticed that when questions were raised there were constant denials. The Liberals denied that there were quotas, that there were abuses and problems, until eventually Members of Parliament, the public and the press were able to prove that the Minister himself did not know what was happening.

When we attempted to get information from the government and talk to public servants, a gag order was issued to every official in the Department not to talk to us. Indeed, there was even an article in the papers which indicated that the then Minister of National Revenue had indicated that if Conservative Members of Parliament wanted information, they would have to use the access to information legislation to get it. Yet those Members today condemn the Government on its policies on openness.

Mr. Boudria: Rightfully so.

Mr. Nunziata: It is a question of honesty.

Mr. Beatty: The Hon. Member says that it is a question of honesty. That is exactly what it is. Nothing could be more dishonest than a government which, during the 12 years I have been here, systematically covered up, systematically withheld information, systematically abused the position of public servants, and systematically abused the tax dollars to polish its own image. Suddenly they say that they are committed to open government.

They have a record, and that record speaks for itself. The record shows that they cannot be trusted when they talk about