

Oral Questions

and especially the Ministry of Transport. Those reports have to be actioned.

I asked this morning if such a report had reached the desk of my deputy minister for consideration. I was advised that the answer was no.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, is it not interesting that this document has been available since March of this year? The minister does not know what is going on in his own department. I have a supplementary question.

This leaked report, which I produced in this House yesterday, also cautions against any cuts in air traffic control training as "there are already too few controllers".

Will the minister now stand in his place and totally reject the recommendations in this report which has been available to him since last April or March?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no way I am going either to accept or reject the information in a report that I have not seen.

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NATIONAL REVENUE

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

We learned today that the government is considering hiring hundreds of tax cops to review as many as 10,000 returns of individual Canadian taxpayers.

In 1984 the Conservative task force on Revenue Canada recommended that fishing expeditions be stopped "in situations where the minister had no specific reasons to believe that certain individuals had not complied with the Income Tax Act".

If fishing expeditions were wrong in 1984, why are they not wrong today? Or, is the minister saying he is as incapable of stopping overfishing as his colleague the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to welcome the hon. member

back to the House of Commons. I think the last time I saw him was—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The minister's comment of course raises two questions: who was here and who was not. The hon. minister.

Mr. Jelinek: I think it was in the streets of Leningrad.

In any event, it is obvious that the hon. member does know that this is an old story, that the department is always looking at improving the effectiveness of collecting taxes.

The hon. member knows that it was the Auditor General who asked us to review these options on a yearly basis. In any event, this is for discussion purposes only at this point in time. We are not in the process of hiring any army of tax collectors or tax police for this, the GST, or anything else.

At all times we are looking at the possibilities of more effectively and efficiently collecting taxes on behalf of the majority of honest taxpayers in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, the bill of rights for Canadian taxpayers which was adopted by this Conservative government includes a presumption of honesty. We are told that a taxpayer must be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

How can the Minister justify such a program which goes against his so-called bill of rights for the Canadian taxpayers?

[*English*]

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I wish that had been the case in the 16 or 20 years of Liberal administration, which it was not.

In order to answer the hon. member's question, surely the Liberal party is not suggesting or recommending that the Government of Canada remove all auditors and all audit movements in Canada, whether it involves personal or corporate income taxes. If that is the position of members of the Liberal party, I would very much appreciate for them to come forward with that view.