

Oral Questions

Even the Leader of the Opposition criticized the CBC during the referendum campaign. I gave one opinion, and there were people who were not satisfied with the CBC's performance, including the Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to set the record straight. The Leader of the Opposition criticized the CBC when the network refused to broadcast the Yes committee's message, not because of its news coverage.

Is the Prime Minister saying that he intends to put back into the Broadcasting Act the obligation to promote national unity and thus force the CBC to be its master's voice instead of an independent news broadcaster?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that what we want is objective news coverage. As I said at the time, I am hardly in a position to complain, because since I want a good night's sleep, I do not listen to the CBC before I go to bed. That is why I am healthy. I get a good night's sleep.

However, we want our news coverage to be objective. But the funny thing is that when the opposition criticizes the CBC, there is no problem. But when the government party does, it is not fair. What I had to say, I said publicly. I have never spoken to the president of the CBC since he was appointed. I let him get on with his job. However, I will not refrain from expressing my opinion as party leader, like the Leader of the Opposition did during the referendum campaign.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general has pointed out that the new E-file method of filing tax returns has serious flaws and is therefore open to substantial abuse, while the Minister of National Revenue says the system just needs a little fine tuning.

Canadians will quickly lose confidence in a system that penalizes honest taxpayers by letting others off the hook while this minister wants to squeeze every taxpayer until it hurts.

• (1440)

What commitment do we have today that the minister will fix the problems raised by the auditor general?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are happy at Revenue Canada to have the comments of the auditor general. However, the hon. member has exaggerated and used figures which are simply not accurate.

The auditor general said: "Although our analysis is insufficient to draw firm conclusions about cause and effect—more years of data are required to determine if this movement is temporary or permanent in nature".

Electronic filing provides substantial improvements in service to Canadians, to the taxpayer and to the government in terms of reduced costs. It improves the opportunity for effective surveillance to prevent fraud by people who might cheat the system. It also dramatically increases the speed with which cheques get out to the public.

It is a new system introduced in 1990. It is a system on which there are not full information years on which we can base substantial comparisons, but every indication is that the system is working absolutely as well as the previous paper system, except for the advantages I outlined.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister is asleep, like most of the others.

The government squeezed another \$7.3 billion out of Canadians in the last fiscal year. It is obvious the government intends to balance the budget through increase taxation, not cuts in spending. Last year it collected \$7.3 billion more in taxes while it reduced the deficit by only \$4.5 billion.

Will the minister admit he does not have a tax cutting policy that works or a taxation collection policy that works, and that he does not know how he will fix either of them?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has correctly pointed out the tax system is generating more revenue. The basic reason is the confidence the business community has in the Minister of Finance. However, if I may modestly add, another reason is that Revenue Canada is working more effectively than ever before.

New developments in technology and the information highway are particularly difficult for Reformers to understand. We must still tell them the old system of inefficiency, time consuming as it was, which cost the taxpayer money and which led to more abuse and fraud, is not the way we will be going in the future.

We have over the last two years picked up \$7 billion through our enforcement programs. We are doing this in a manner which recognizes that the client, the ordinary Canadian taxpayer, is in almost every case, at least 96 per cent, an honest citizen.

The approach of the opposition—

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[Translation]

MANPOWER TRAINING

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister does not listen to Radio-Canada, one wonders how he can criticize the network.

My question is directed to the Minister of Human Resources Development. In his report released yesterday, the auditor general made it clear that manpower training programs are poorly adapted to the requirements of Canadian businesses.