

REQUEST THAT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE EXAMINE
DEPARTMENT'S PRACTICES

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Acting Prime Minister if the Government has given consideration to the suggestion made by the Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead last week, and whether it is now not ready to authorize a standing committee of the House to look at the relationship between Revenue Canada and the taxpayers of Canada? Even a select or special committee would be quite satisfactory. We would have guidelines with respect to this committee which would provide that any person coming forward would have immunity with respect to evidence given and would not be subject to harassment by the Department.

Would the Acting Prime Minister now stand up and say that he is prepared to authorize that kind of committee, which would be able to travel in Canada, in the interest of resolving this matter with Revenue Canada?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, again, I would not dare intervene in the decisions of the committees. These are the kinds of decisions that committees make themselves.

As everyone knows, there will be an inquiry into these matters. I would have thought that, with the authority and the prestige that committees have in this House, a *modus vivendi* would be invented between the Minister of National Revenue and the committee. I would have thought that the committee would find a way to invite the Minister of National Revenue to see it at irregular or regular intervals, depending on the progress of the inquiry. I am sure the Minister of National Revenue, being a very democratic man, will find accommodation with the committee on these matters.

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PRIVACY

PRODUCTION OF LETTERS WRITTEN BY LEADER OF THE
OPPOSITION ACTING IN PRIVATE CAPACITY

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the Acting Prime Minister. Since last Tuesday, and again on Friday of last week, I have been concerned about the manner in which the Minister of Finance, in answering a question from the Leader of the Opposition, indicated that he had private letters from the Leader of the Opposition in his former role as president of a private company, and that those letters could be detrimental to the public career of the Leader of the Opposition. Does the Government have an ongoing policy, as could be indicated from the reply from the Minister of Finance, whereby it has public servants or others scouring the files of Government looking for letters, correspondence or papers, which could be used at the appropriate political moment against that individual?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I can only speak with the common sense at my command in this matter, which is sometimes very useful, I can say to the

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Member for Kingston and the Islands. Its usefulness is that obviously this is not a policy of the Government.

My understanding of the events that occurred a week ago is that there was an exchange between the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister of Finance, at which point the Leader of the Opposition challenged the Minister of Finance to bring these documents—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nowlan: No.

Mr. Pepin: That was my interpretation. Consequently the Minister of Finance simply answered a request of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Epp: I wish the Acting Prime Minister would use common sense in this issue.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF INDIVIDUALS' CORRESPONDENCE WITH
GOVERNMENT

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, there have been earlier occasions when members have been raising letters in public and saying "I have a list of names". That is intimidation, and that is what the Minister of Finance did. That legacy is in the parliamentary system, and that Minister is answerable for it, and the Acting Prime Minister is answerable before it.

I ask the Acting Prime Minister, speaking on behalf of the Government, what guidelines are there for Ministers that correspondence that individuals have sent to Government will be held in the confidence in which those writers wanted it to be held, or is there now a policy in Government that anything goes for the survival of the Liberal Party and the Liberal Government, and that whatever is needed, no matter how dirty or corrupt, you are going to use it?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, using common sense again, there must be a debate here between the secrecy of correspondence of businessmen or anyone else and the Government on certain matters, and second, the freedom of information which is a prominent preoccupation of the House.

I am sorry; I wish I knew all about the intricacies and legal answers, but I do not have them. Might I suggest that I will bring this question to the attention of the Prime Minister who might answer it upon a further request from the Member?

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IMMIGRATION

REPLACEMENT OF COURT REPORTERS WITH RECORDING
DEVICES IN IMMIGRATION OFFICES

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. It concerns the proposal to replace skilled court reporters in immigration offices in Toronto and Mississauga