

Oral Questions

Minister had seven occasions on which he could have given a vote of confidence to his Deputy Minister. He refused to do so. This morning, in a formal way, the axe fell on Bruce MacDonald. Clearly he is the scapegoat. He is the one to carry the can.

I ask the Minister two questions. First, will the Minister please clearly state the reasons why Mr. MacDonald was dumped? Second, what responsibility does the Minister assign to himself for the tremendous chaos that exists within Revenue Canada? What responsibility does the Minister assign to himself for the maltreatment and the maladministration of his Department?

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I first want to correct the Hon. Member's question. The Deputy Minister of National Revenue was not fired.

An Hon. Member: He escaped.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bussières: He was reassigned to other responsibilities in the Privy Council Office.

Second, I want to tell the Hon. Member that I want to continue with my work with the officials of the Department—

Mr. Crosbie: What work?

Mr. Bussières: —in order to serve the Canadian taxpayers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: Feeble applause.

Mr. Speyer: Mr. Speaker, Mr. MacDonald is being used as a sacrificial lamb. He is the one the Liberals have assigned to carry the can for the irresponsibility of the Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of National Revenue have any intention whatsoever, because ministerial responsibility is assigned to him, of tendering his resignation?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hey, hey!

Mr. Trudeau: I am glad on this side we have a Leader that the other side can say "Ho, ho, hey!" at. But when does their Leader show up?

Some Hon. Members: Never.

Mr. Trudeau: Never.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: He asked you a question yesterday.

Mr. Crosbie: Try to be relevant.

Mr. Trudeau: I would want to answer that question very simply, Mr. Speaker. If the Minister had any idea of retiring, I would have dissuaded him and refused his resignation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speyer: It is very interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, seeing a lame duck Prime Minister defending the indefensible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

FARLINGER STUDY

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, I have another question for the Minister of National Revenue. Over two months ago Mr. Farlinger was assigned the task of looking into the administration of Revenue Canada. He was to report to the Minister on an interim basis on what he found.

Has the Minister talked to Mr. Farlinger? Has he talked about the administration of the day-to-day activities of Mr. MacDonald? Was any weight placed on Mr. Farlinger's representations in the reassignment of the Deputy Minister?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have to make it clear that the Hon. Member does not know what he is talking about. Deputy Ministers are not reassigned by Ministers. Deputy Ministers are appointed on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, not of the Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SUGGESTED APPOINTMENT OF OMBUDSMAN

Mr. John McDermid (Brampton-Georgetown): Mr. Speaker, my question is also addressed to the Minister of National Revenue. The Minister appointed Mr. Farlinger to investigate the Department. The Prime Minister fired the Deputy Minister as he just stated. The Department is now putting cute little ads in the paper to try to appear to be helpful. It is the first time the Department has done so in six years.

Mr. Nielsen: At a cost of \$300,000.

Mr. McDermid: The Minister is saying that Members should contact district offices to solve the problems. Then, lo and behold, last weekend the Minister went out to Vancouver, admitted he could not solve the problems of his Department, and suggested that the Government appoint an ombudsman to solve the problems of the Department. Don't you think that is enough evidence to demand the Minister's resignation?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member stated something which is false in his question, that Mr. MacDonald had been fired. He has not been fired, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Crosbie: Dispensed with, emasculated, removed.