

Oral Questions

House that he had instructed his Department to look at the particular circumstances of taxpayers. Then he said that an attempt should be made to reach a settlement that is acceptable to both parties. At the same time that the Minister was giving these assurances in the House, one of my constituents, David Quast, of Wilmot Township, was being reproached by a supervisor in the Kitchener tax office for having approached his Member of Parliament. He had been in touch with my office because he did not feel that he was being treated justly by the Department.

Will the Minister give an assurance that in the future no taxpayer in Canada will be intimidated for exercising his or her democratic right of being in touch with a Member of Parliament about the operations of Government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, Canadian taxpayers certainly have every right to meet their Members of Parliament and submit their concerns, and it is a policy of this Government that these rights are to be respected by all Departments. Now, I do not think the Hon. Member should judge on the basis of an isolated incident. This is a common practice that is widespread. I think the Hon. Member knows perfectly well that he, just as well as other Canadian taxpayers, is free to refer to Members of Parliament and to the Ministers who act to correct specific situations, provided they exist!

[English]

APPEARANCE OF WITNESSES BEFORE PROGRESSIVE
CONSERVATIVE TASK FORCE

Mr. Walter McLean (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, the Minister suggested that my colleague from Cambridge was exaggerating, and is now suggesting to me that this is an isolated case. Let me tell the Minister that I visited the Kitchener tax office at his request on Monday, and I informed the director of six cases. This was one of the cases.

Will the Minister given an assurance, since Canadians are anxious to know that this is not an exaggerated case—no parliamentary committee has been set up, and he refuses to give a mandate to a committee—that with regard to the task force of the Progressive Conservative Party which will begin travelling across the country, no one who appears before it will be intimidated in any way and face reprisals because they speak to Members of Parliament?

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the answer is so obvious that I do not even have to state it. I point out to the Hon. Member and the Leader of his Party that I have already set up a committee, chaired by a very competent group of professionals, instead of a group of amateurs who probably want to play political games instead of looking at the well-being of all Canadians.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, Canadian taxpayers who have concerns can write to the Minister to make those concerns known, and whoever makes representations to a Member of Parliament, who in turn passes them on to the Minister or to other committees, is certainly not going to suffer any kind of discrimination whatsoever.

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[English]

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

LAND CLAIMS AGREEMENT—POSITION OF DENE AND METIS

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, during amateur hour I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The recently concluded land claims agreement with COPE in the Northwest Territories ignored a vital overlap with the Dene-Metis claims near Aklavik. Dene-Metis in this area will be shut out from resource management and participation in their homeland. The Minister promised that any overlap would be resolved in a fair manner. Can he explain to the House why he initialled an agreement which ignored Dene-Metis claims, and will he act now to prevent this injustice from becoming permanent?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the unavoidable implication of the Hon. Member's question was that not only was the Government of Canada being unjust, but the Inuit, and COPE, who also signed it, are unjust. They signed the agreement as well. If the Hon. Member thinks that the Inuit and COPE would intentionally perpetrate an unjust act on the Dene-Metis, that is a conclusion he can live with when next he meets the Inuit as opposed to the Dene-Metis in his office.

Let me tell him that we did not ignore the overlap question at all. We have a mechanism in place which I was requested by the Dene-Metis to put in place, a fact-finder. We are getting the fact-finder's report to the Dene-Metis and to COPE. We intend to address that problem fully. When the Dene-Metis were in my office they asked if I would address the problem after they had a chance to study the fact-finder's report, and I said I would. Frankly, I think the Hon. Member has been lured into taking this confrontational approach based on I do not know what, perhaps newspaper reports. Certainly the Dene-Metis felt that they had an amicable solution to the matter after they left my office. I do not know what they said to the Hon. Member.

• (1440)

REQUEST THAT MINISTER RECONSIDER AGREEMENT
PROVISIONS

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. Far from taking a confrontational approach, I want to see a settlement that will introduce an era of racial harmony