

*Oral Questions*

with representatives of fishermen's associations, and I will be pleased to convey information to the House when we have come to a common position.

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● (1442)

[English]

**INCOME TAX****BREACH OF CONFIDENTIALITY OF TAX RETURNS—  
GOVERNMENT ACTION**

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to return to the question asked earlier in connection with the revelations made in the city of Toronto by two most responsible and reputable individuals.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister—I will wait until he finishes his consultations. I suggest that if he is getting legal advice from the Minister of Justice, he should go elsewhere.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I would ask him to realize that it is 60 years ago this month that the Income Tax Act was placed on the statute books of this country and in all these years there has not been a more shocking revelation than the one that is now being looked at. I ask him this—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, I find that these gentlemen over there, unidentified and unidentifiable, have a way of trying to howl down the opposition.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I ask him this: Will he now say something regarding this matter? Apparently he has been in consultation with the Minister of National Revenue. What is the present position? Is there any suggestion whatever—and I do not think there can be—that the revelations are not correct? What are you going to do about it instead of postponing action? What are you going to do today so that Canadians will not regard it as being an open season on their income tax returns? The Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations smirks!

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, like the Minister of National Revenue I am extremely concerned about this revelation. The Minister of National Revenue has been in touch with his officials this morning and we

[Mr. LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent).]

have asked for information about this because no previous information has been available to the department on this. Right away the Department of National Revenue contacted the RCMP because we consider this matter to be extremely serious. It is another great institution which is perhaps at this moment under attack.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Chrétien:** The Department of National Revenue has always served the interests of this nation very well in keeping all the information extremely confidential. I hope that the RCMP will be able to find the individual who has committed the crime of revealing this information and, as the Minister of National Revenue has said, that the individual or individuals involved will be prosecuted very severely because we cannot allow anyone to tamper with the tax returns of Canadian citizens.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** The minister suggests that a department of the government is under attack. It is the maladministration of this government that is under attack.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I ask him, has he been in touch with these two reputable persons in Toronto to ascertain from them the basis for the copyright article which they have put before the public? It cannot be brushed aside and it requires immediate action. Has he been in touch or has anyone from among his officials or those of the Department of National Revenue been in touch with the two persons? This is a damnable situation which has been revealed and it cannot be laughed off or brushed aside.

**Mr. Chrétien:** I share the concern of the right hon. member and I have asked people who are probably the best equipped to deal with criminal offences, namely, the RCMP, to look into the matter right away. This is a group of law enforcement officers in Canada in which I have complete confidence, and I think it is the best door on which I could knock at this moment. Of course, if I have to speak to Mr. Templeton and Mr. Berton, I would be willing to do that, but I hope that those individuals and other people who have known about this for more than 24 hours will collaborate to the maximum—

**Mr. Broadbent:** Including the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Chrétien:** —with the law officers of the Crown, the RCMP, in order to make sure that everyone who is guilty of anything is prosecuted as quickly as possible. One thing that is perhaps a little bit surprising—

**Some hon. Members:** Order.

**Mr. Chrétien:** This thing has been in the mill since Sunday and I have asked the RCMP if they knew anything about it. They have told us that they did not know anything until the program came on the air this morning. Perhaps some individu-