

the Government should look into this. First, why the form not be simplified and, second, why is the federal Government charging 75 per cent of Canadians too much income tax as a result of the income tax tables?

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

ABSENCE OF MINISTERS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I rise to express concern about the absence of some crucial Ministers. In fact there are now 36 Ministers in the cabinet. I had some questions for the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) on an international matter.

Mr. Nielsen: There are only five Ministers here now.

Mr. Broadbent: The Prime Minister is not here. The Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen) is not here. Then I had a question for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde). He is not here. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Lumley) is not here. The Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) is not here. The Minister of State for International Trade (Mr. Regan) is not here, nor is the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Lamontagne). I have named over a half a dozen Ministers with whom we intended to raise questions.

The point is not, of course, that every day Ministers should be here. We understand they have obligations. But there are 36 Members of Cabinet and there are only seven present in the House this morning. That is not acceptable in terms of a Ministry which has a sense of responsibility to the people of Canada.

• (1115)

I conclude with the observation that it is Friday the thirteenth. That is normally a day when bad things happen. Normally we are not pleased with the answers we receive, but we do not think this is an appropriate response even for a Liberal Cabinet on Friday the thirteenth.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

AIR CANADA

SELECTION OF MONTREAL HEADQUARTERS—ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE INVESTIGATION

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley-Hants): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. In view of the Minister's non-answers yesterday about the criminal investigation into the activities of the Chairman of Air Canada, and in view of the amazing nonchalance of the Prime Minister in allowing his friend to continue in office pending

Oral Questions

the outcome of the investigation, could the Minister tell the House that the investigation involves allegations that the Chairman of Air Canada fraudulently conspired with Montreal developers Isaac Gelber, Bernard St. Jacques and Pierre Jolicœur to receive secret kickbacks of \$3.6 million in the relocation of Air Canada's headquarters in Montreal, contrary to Section 423(1)(d) and 338(1) of the Criminal Code?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, the answer has been given now at least 15 times. My hon. friend would probably like the Minister of Justice or me to say something and then he could interpret it as a guilt accusation on our part of the Chairman of Air Canada. He is a lawyer. I think he respects that no one is guilty without having been charged with anything. There is no presumption of guilt in our system of law. I suggest that anything I could have said in the past or could say now could be interpreted as that. Consequently, the position of the Government all through this—and I dislike it as much as my hon. friend in terms of not yet having the report of the RCMP—has been not to talk about it. I have referred to it so many times that I am even bored with it myself.

Mr. Nowlan: I appreciate part of the Minister's answer. He is quite right; this is a delicate matter which can be distasteful.

MINISTER'S TELEPHONE CALL TO CHAIRMAN

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley-Hants): Madam Speaker, this is not an ordinary situation of a Canadian citizen being investigated. This is a public official of a Crown corporation who is still continuing in office, even though a policeman on the beat who is under investigation in any type of affair is suspended until the investigation is completed.

I find it intolerable that the Minister or the Minister of Justice, inside or outside the House, has not made a statement about the investigation, as to when it started, its status, and when it will be concluded, notwithstanding the fact that this Minister in early December, according to his answer in *Hansard* on December 20, 1982, telephoned the Chairman of Air Canada to warn him about the criminal investigation long before the RCMP raided the Chairman's offices and home. In view of that fact, could the Minister tell the House what he told the Chairman when he telephoned him to warn him about the investigation? Is it not really a double standard of justice, to warn someone under criminal investigation? Is that what happens to other citizens?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Minister of Justice): Madam Speaker, it is precisely because there is not a double standard of justice that we are not able to answer my hon. friend's question. The rule of law, as he ought to know, applies equally to everyone. What he is trying to do is to establish selective standards for the rule of law so that in those cases where he wants more information he would have it. That is not the tradition of this country and I hope it never will be. I am sorry my hon. friend cannot live up to our traditions.