

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I did express my concern and emphasize the need to have from each district office the assurance that Government and departmental policies will be fully respected. I have just indicated to his colleague that I was assured by senior Department officials that, if unfortunate steps were taken, they have been stopped as a result of the guidelines which were issued. I think that such assurances will go a long way towards sustaining the confidence of Canadian taxpayers in the practices of the Department of National Revenue.

[English]

DEPARTMENT'S ATTITUDE TO TAXPAYERS

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the Minister that it is not only members on this side of the House who have expressed concern. The Hon. Member for Kitchener has quite properly expressed his concern with respect to Revenue Canada. Last week in Calgary, the Hon. Member for Sudbury said:

I think we have to assert the political will on top of the Revenue Canada Department and just say "Back Off".

● (1425)

After six weeks of intense questioning with respect to the attitude, and misbehaviour in my view, of Revenue Canada, will the Minister, on the premise that confession is good for the soul, please admit that there are attitudinal problems in his Department?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I have good news for the Hon. Member. He has mentioned a few Members on this side of the House who are concerned as well about the Department of National Revenue. I must say that Government Members regularly speak to me very politely and very constructively about the problems they have to deal with concerning the Department of National Revenue, and that I am always eager to co-operate with Liberal Members to make sure that each specific case concerning taxpayers who might be wronged or need help to straighten out tax problems will be given proper consideration. I can always count on the active support of Liberal Members to redress such situations.

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[English]

CORPORATE AFFAIRS

GOVERNMENT'S COMPETITION POLICY

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, who knows there has been a tremendous growth in takeovers in Canada, particularly foreign takeovers, in the past two decades. The past two years have been record years for

takeovers in Canada. The Government knows very well the effect of mergers on the Canadian economy and the adverse effects on pricing and jobs.

Will the Minister now assure the House that the long promised amendments to combines legislation, which apparently we are finally going to be seeing in this House, will have the necessary clout to protect workers and consumers from continued and increasing anticompetitive and unproductive takeovers, and not simply be a sop to big business?

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Hon. Member that the new competition policy, which I hope to table in this House very shortly, will be a dynamic, creative competition policy which will bring to the Canadian market the kind of policy that reflects the economic reality of our times. I expect the strong support of the Member.

MINISTER'S CONSULTATIONS WITH BUSINESS GROUPS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, we know that at least one group is apparently happy with the proposals, having seen confidential documents; that is, the Business Council on National Issues, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and the Canadian Manufacturer's Association. Why have the Minister and her predecessor chosen to consult very closely only with those organizations and refused to give documentation or provide consultation to the other groups affected, particularly labour and the Consumers Association of Canada? Why is she just cozying up to big business, which seems particularly happy with the Bill which is going to be tabled?

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): The facts as the Member states them are not correct. The three organizations to which he refers make up the business community of Canada, both big and small. When you take in the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Business Council, and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, you are covering all business interests in the country. We did, of course, consult with them and, because of that, we are coming forward with a Bill which, as I said, is dynamic and realistic. But I would like to add that we have consulted with other groups such as the Consumers Association of Canada, and we plan to broaden that consultation within the next couple of weeks.

NEWSPAPER OWNERSHIP CONCENTRATION

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, if the Government has consulted with the Consumers Association of Canada, it is news to that body as of this morning.

One of the glaring illustrations of the weakness of the present combines legislation was demonstrated by the dismissal of charges against the Southam and Thomson Newspaper chains. The Minister's colleague, who was dumped from the cabinet, had a proposal in the Canadian Daily Newspaper Act