

Adjournment Debate

dren to pay the tax assessments of the parents should not even be raised in this House, because it is so unthinkable, a reply only gives it dignity. As the Minister has already made clear in his reply, the mistake was made by banking officials. However, reporting of that mistake did not equal in coverage the reporting of the original story.

It is most unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that some of the practices of Revenue Canada have been so maligned in recent months, and not for the benefit of the taxpayers, but for very narrow interests which are basically political in nature and to some extent self-serving. In this case it is unfortunate that the mistake was made, not by the Revenue officials but by the banking officials. Yet the Department is being blamed.

I have been invited in recent weeks to discuss some of the grievances raised in public meetings. I have no hesitation in admitting that in the collection of tax, which is never going to be regarded as a popular occupation, mistakes or errors of judgment do occur. However, the wholesale condemnation of the system is a very great disservice to the Canadian taxpaying public. In a country which has until now been able to boast one of the most efficient and honest tax systems in the world, such wholesale condemnation harms not the Government so much as those of us whose taxes run this country.

The Hon. Member referred to another question he raised, and I just want to touch on that very briefly. I feel he has fallen into the trap of distinguishing a bit of gossip, and unsubstantiated and completely false rumour by bringing it to the attention of the House of Commons. The suggestion was made that tax officials, after agreeing to attend the meeting of farmers, went to the parking lot with flashlights to take down licence plate numbers of those attending the meeting. That suggestion obtained the reply it deserved from the Minister on February 6, that the conclusions the Hon. Member was trying to draw were, and I quote, "too ridiculous to even be considered".

According to the information I received, the meeting in question was attended by three officials from the Vancouver district office. They were there at the request of organizers of a group of farmers protesting audit action in the area. The tax officials were there to answer questions, trying to interpret the tax law, and to explain the routes available to taxpayers who disagreed with the position of the Department. They were there to be open and available to the taxpayers. To turn around and accuse them of such low tactics is not only ludicrous, it is unfair and unworthy of any Member of this House. To talk about unsubstantiated rumours in a place which is known as the rumour mill of Canada, is grossly unfair.

• (1820)

PUBLIC WORKS—USE OF MUNICIPAL WASTES TO GENERATE
STEAM

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, in 1980 the Ontario Ministry of Energy, Public Works Canada, the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and Ontario Hydro agreed to study the feasibility of using munic-

ipal wastes in the national capital area to generate, within the steam plant, heat and cooling materials for federal buildings. Such a project was of course of interest to the federal and provincial governments as it would replace a non-renewable fossil fuel, natural gas, which is used now, with a renewable fuel, municipal waste. Consequently it would have an important impact in that it would replace a scarce resource with a renewable one.

Consultants' reports on the feasibility of this energy-from-waste project indicated it was technically and economically viable at either the Le Breton Flats in the riding of Ottawa-Centre, or the Overbrook Coventry Road site in my riding. Strong opposition to this project was voiced by quite a few people at public meetings which I attended. Many people came out to indicate to all levels of Government how they felt about this project.

I was present at one meeting where there were about 800 people in the Overbrook area. I must recognize the work of the citizens' groups to bring this matter to public attention. I think it was quite important. I remember addressing the meeting and saying, in certain terms, that as far as I was concerned, amongst other things, it was very bad urban planning to thrust an energy waste plant into a residential downtown area. We were told at that meeting that 100 garbage trucks an hour would be going through the community at peak periods. You can well imagine the pollution, the noise, and the odour caused by all these trucks going through a neighbourhood. Without getting into the technical and environmental impact of the plant itself, you can imagine how this would affect the quality of life in one's neighbourhood.

Early this week I received a letter from a Mrs. Fern Casey, Chairperson representing the citizens against the incinerator plant in Overbrook, advising me that the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton would seek an early meeting with the appropriate federal and provincial Ministers to review the recommendations of these reports which had been ordered with a view to arriving at a decision regarding the project.

On April 4 I asked the Minister of Public Works (Mr. LeBlanc) if his Department had taken a position relating to the financing and possible participation of his Department in this project. I specifically asked the Minister:

Given the environmental difficulties and the high costs of this project, will the Minister's Department take a position of instigating, promoting, or supporting this steam plant in the near future?

I purposely utilized the word "instigate, promote and support" because in my view that covered any possible involvement of Public Works Canada in this project.

The Minister answered that on the one hand he had sent a letter that morning to the Province of Ontario and to the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton informing them that: "—the Department of Public Works and the National Capital Commission will not be proponents of this project".

The purpose of this debate tonight, Mr. Speaker, is to find out what the Minister meant by this Shakespearean term "proponent". Oxford dictionary defines it as "to put forward a motion, theory or proposal". I admit, with all those trying to