

Oral Questions

Minister be prepared to table legislation so that we can deal with major changes of policy, so that we can protect the livelihood of British Columbia fishermen and their communities, and reflect the views of those communities rather than of the Minister, his advisers, and his Department?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I would answer that by saying, not necessarily legislation, but if necessary. I do not want to commit myself to one option in preference to another.

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THE BUDGET

PRE-PRESENTATION PRESS ARRANGEMENTS

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance my question is directed to the Minister of State for Finance. It concerns the arrangements for the presentation of the Budget Speech next week. The Minister of Finance wishes to lock up the press permanently, but in this case he suggested they be locked up before his speech in order to study the budget documents and that they be kept in the lockup for at least one hour thereafter, or until his speech to the House is concluded. The Press Gallery has rightly refused to accept this blatant attempt at censorship and news management.

● (1430)

I ask the Minister if new proposals are going to be made to the Press Gallery by the Department of Finance which will permit them to study the Budget documents, properly and release them, just as they were released on December 19, 1979, to report to and interpret for the Canadian people, or is the press to be prevented from properly reporting the coming Budget of February 15?

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions with the Press Gallery about the arrangements which have been proposed. Full facilities will be made available for the Press Gallery to ensure that the Canadian people receive the maximum information about the Budget in the most expeditious and efficient way possible.

REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER INTERVENE

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the same Minister. It is hard to know whether the theme song of the Government is "Roll out the pork-barrel", or "I'm going to wash the press right out of my hair". There have been no arrangements made with the Press Gallery with respect to proper coverage of the budget speech which permits them to see the documents ahead of time. The Minister wants them to sign a document saying they will report nothing until he has transgressed upon the time of the Canadian people for one hour.

Perhaps I should ask this of the Prime Minister because he is well known for his warm relationship with the press. Will the Prime Minister intervene and direct his officials and the Minister to let the press out at eight o'clock, or whatever the hour is that the Minister starts his speech, so they can properly report the fantastic exploits of his Government as documented in the budget speech?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I take it the Opposition agrees with the idea of a lockup of the press, otherwise they would be complaining, as always, that there is a budget leak, and we obviously cannot give the budget documents to anyone before the budget hour.

Mr. Crosbie: There is one now.

Mr. Trudeau: Therefore, he agrees with the principle of the lockup, and I guess the rest of the matter is how long should it last. Therefore, his virtuous indignation about locking up and freedom of speech is just a matter of quantity, not quality.

Mr. Crosbie: There has already been a leak. Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Peterborough.

Mr. Domm: Mr. Speaker, I have a question—

Mr. Crosbie: Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker? I guess I have had the final question.

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NATIONAL REVENUE

DEPARTMENT'S SEIZURE OF TAXPAYERS' ASSETS

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue. We now have a system in Canada which allows Revenue Canada to consider a taxpayer guilty without a trial and then, with the Minister's blessing, proceed to garnishee salaries, seize bank accounts of children, seniors and the handicapped, and lock up businesses, without a trial. How does the Minister of Revenue justify the principle of guilty until proven innocent, which is against the most basic principles on which our whole Canadian system is founded?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is referring to the fact that a taxpayer who has received a notice of assessment from the Department must pay even though he may have filed a notice of objection or decided to bring the matter before the court.

I would urge the Hon. Member to re-examine the provisions of the act which stipulate that the Minister must collect the taxes once an assessment notice has been issued, notwithstanding any notice of objection or appeal. Still, the Hon. Member will be glad to know that the practice of the Department is to