

Oral Questions

Mr. Riis: This question will not require the same amount of baffle-gab.

TAX LOOPHOLES AND INCENTIVES

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister is precisely this: considering the 200 loopholes presently in place in the tax system, what mechanisms does the federal Government have in place to ensure that those benefits accrue to Canada and to Canadians?

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member opposite speaks of loopholes. Presumably what he has in mind are what other people call tax incentives.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacLaren: The Hon. Member opposite has spoken earlier—

Mr. Speaker: With all due respect to the Hon. Minister, this is hardly the proper subject for an exchange in Question Period, and with all due respect to the Hon. Member. The Hon. Member for Cambridge.

* * *

NATIONAL REVENUE

REQUEST THAT MINISTER RESIGN

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of National Revenue. We witnessed a few moments ago, quite rightly, his apology for the publication of innocent names every six months. We witnessed yesterday the withdrawal of a film which was shown and produced at a cost of \$190,000, the characteristic of which was to intimidate. We have seen over past months the acknowledgement of the existence of quotas which have caused untold anguish for Canadians. We have also seen tremendous intrusions into our civil rights. There is one thing that is crystal clear, that is, that the Minister has a mind untrammelled by any knowledge of his Department, and regrettably he has not put a bridle on tactics which Canadians will not accept.

I wonder whether the Minister will answer this question. Will he be the first Minister of this Government on a question of principle to resign, because he has not done the job he was charged with doing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I have already had occasion to answer the Hon. Member's partisan and vicious insinuations. Both the Hon. Member and his colleague are clever at distorting the facts. I have already indicated to the Hon. Member that it is my responsibility as Minister of National Revenue to ensure that

the Department of National Revenue enforces the Income Tax Act in a manner that is fair to all Canadian taxpayers, and the Hon. Member will agree that the vast majority—over 90 per cent—of Canadian taxpayers pay their taxes without even seeing the colour of that money, and that the Department must ensure that other taxpayers who do not have their income tax deducted at source are audited in order to ensure that the system is fair. Mr. Speaker, I thoroughly understand these responsibilities, I assume them to the best of my ability, and I do not intend to resign.

• (1430)

[*English*]

EFFECT OF OFFICIALS' ACTIONS ON TAXPAYERS

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister thinks that we on this side are vicious in asking the questions, he should see how his departmental officials are attacking the Canadian people. Under the Minister's stewardship, what was a watchdog has now become a bloodhound.

Does the Minister acknowledge that thousands of people have been detrimentally affected by the actions of Revenue Canada officials with respect to the imposition of quotas, and with respect to acts of intimidation and harassment, which have been raised not only from this side of the House but from the other side of the House? Does the Minister acknowledge that there is something wrong with his Department?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Hon. Member is grossly exaggerating the facts. Second, the Hon. Member is ignorant of the measures I have taken. For instance, I announced publicly that a Task Force directed by Mr. Farlinger would be examining certain management practices within the Department, and his priority would be to examine the manner in which we, as a Department, deal with Canadian taxpayers. Bearing in mind the rights of the taxpayer and the requirements of acceptable behaviour as a human being in dealing with taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, this shows the Government is particularly concerned to ensure that this Department, which has a very special and extremely difficult function that is clearly defined in our legislation, that this Department is assuming its extremely heavy burden of responsibility while respecting the rights of the taxpayer.

Mr. Speaker, instead of trying grossly to alter the facts and to spread panic, the Hon. Member should consider the positive measures that have been taken by this Government.

[*English*]

FREEDOM OF TAXPAYERS TO CONSULT MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Walter McLean (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to a question by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe, the Minister assured the