

Oral Questions

Mr. Bussières: Let us look at the facts. I have refused to become involved in the fishing expedition the Hon. Member and his colleagues were conducting. I have refused to play the nit-picking games the Hon. Member and his colleagues were playing.

An Hon. Member: You have refused to do anything.

Mr. Bussières: My responsibility was to show, the first time a particular situation was brought to my attention, Hon. Members of the House and the taxpayers of the country that I was concerned about it.

I took steps. First, the policy not to have quotas imposed on individual auditors in the Department was clearly reaffirmed to all our district offices by local management. Second, my responsibility was to have assurances as to where and when such particular situations existed. They were corrected by local management. I have received those assurances, and I want to reiterate to Hon. Members and to the taxpayers of the country that I have assurances that no individual particular quota is imposed on our auditors in the Department of National Revenue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

IMPORTANCE OF ISSUE

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Minister could answer this simple question. How can Canadians believe him now when they could not believe him before? Why should we believe that he is telling the truth now?

The Minister dismisses protecting the rights of taxpayers as nit-picking. In view of the fact that he feels the quota issue is sufficiently important to issue directives to every district tax office in the country to have it stopped, why does he feel individual taxpayers, whose rights have been affected here, are not entitled to the information so that they may know whether their reassessments came as a result of these odious quotas?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, our Members and other Members of the House, as well as other Canadian taxpayers had a chance to hear yesterday, or to read today, the comments of someone who I think can be expected to be objective since he is the president of the Union of Employees of National Revenue Taxation.

After meeting with senior departmental officials, Mr. Gillespie, the Union President, said he was convinced that there was no such policy. Mr. Speaker, I do not think the President of the Union of National Revenue Employees is out to save anyone's credibility, not even mine.

I think these objective comments confirm that my answers were correct, and Canadian taxpayers now have twice the assurance that they are being treated fairly and equitably by the people responsible for auditing the accounts of a specific

group of taxpayers who are in a very special situation in terms of the Income Tax Act, compared to millions of other taxpayers who have to take it for granted that the system is fair and equitable because they have no choice in the matter. They pay their taxes every week or two weeks or every month.

● (1420)

[*English*]

MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, the Minister talks of Mr. Gillespie attempting to protect his credibility. He has no credibility. I ask the Minister to answer the question, and I would like a direct answer. In view of the fact that the Minister feels that these odious quotas were sufficiently damaging to taxpayers that he has issued a directive that they are to stop, why does he feel that affected taxpayers are not entitled to know that their reassessment had come as a result of quotas in their particular district offices?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, it is clear the Hon. Member is readily inclined to make judgments on the basis of assumptions, and does so either on his own or his Leader's very generous account. They condemn people without even hearing what they have to say and probably without even knowing them. I would like to point out to the Hon. Member that if I had the slightest suspicion that the system had been odious, that is to say, that it had caused excessive recovery of monies from taxpayers, I would take further action.

However, being aware of the established practice for carrying out audits and issuing tax notices, I have no reason to harbour any doubts on this point.

[*English*]

EXTENT OF QUOTA SYSTEM

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the same Minister. For the past six weeks he has acted like he is Pontius Pilate, wanting to wash his hands of the irresponsibility his subordinates have shown to the taxpayers of Canada. I am not going to refer to the Minister's statement, but I am going to refer to a statement by the Director General of Taxation of Canada. Yesterday he said this:

There are supervisors who are more off-the-line and aggressive on their own. There are some people who did set quotas or figures.

We want to know the extent to which quotas have existed in Canada. That is the point. The Minister has done an investigation, and he knows the extent of the quotas. Where do quotas exist? In what aspects and subsections of the Department do they exist? Has he talked to Mr. Shoobert of the Toronto office who has said that not only have they existed with respect to small businesses, but also in other areas? Will he answer that specific question?