

How can the Charter of Rights protect a taxpayer in a situation where he has been reassessed and the Government demands that he pay now, before he has had a fair hearing? How can it ensure that he will get a fair hearing before he has to make payment? How does the present Charter of Rights give full protection against that kind of situation? And if full protection is there, why is it that the taxpayer has to make his payment before his hearing under the present tax system?

[Translation]

**Mr. Bussières:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think it was my intention to turn down outright the proposal contained in the report prepared by the committee of the Progressive Conservative Caucus, regarding a more direct expression of rights and responsibilities. I think the Hon. Member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty) will agree when I add "and taxpayers' responsibilities", considering the tenor of the discussion we had. He agrees that in a self-assessment system, both rights and responsibilities must be made clear. I think this goes without saying, in view of the close correlation between these two concepts.

I would like to make it clear to the Hon. Member that I do not want to hide behind this particular concept of rights and responsibilities *vis-à-vis* a Department or the administration of an extremely complex Act, especially with respect to this group of taxpayers. I simply would like to draw the attention of the Hon. Member to the letter I wrote to my deputy minister when he commenced his duties. In that letter I stressed the fact that in our communications with the taxpayer, whether these would concern assessment or collection issues, we should indicate to the taxpayer his rights and recourse with respect to the Department's decisions. I should also like to indicate to the Hon. Member that the whole issue of collecting taxes after assessment is now being examined, that a more flexible approach has already been proposed by this Government, either through the Budget or through strict administrative measures, and that the concept must be examined within the context of the whole concept of our tax system—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** I am sorry, but I shall have to interrupt the Hon. Minister because his time has expired.

[English]

**Hon. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury):** Mr. Speaker, I would first of all like to congratulate my colleague, the Hon. Member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty), for an excellent address on his motion, which gives us an opportunity as parliamentarians to discuss a matter of great importance to the people of Canada. I would be remiss in my duties as well if I did not also congratulate the Hon. Member and his task force for the excellent job done in travelling across Canada and gathering such extremely useful information.

In his remarks a moment ago, the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Bussières) made the distinction between the role

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of the Minister of National Revenue and the role of the Minister of Finance. He was correct in making this distinction. Both Ministers are members of the same Cabinet, a Cabinet which speaks with unity. As a member of that Cabinet, the Minister of National Revenue has a rare opportunity to propose and fight for tax reform in substance, if he so desires. As Minister of National Revenue, he has the unique opportunity to correct administrative defects within his Department. The Minister is in a unique position no matter which route we take in helping to bring about the reforms which we have spoken of and will speak of in the course of this debate.

I would like to thank the Minister for being present during this debate. I hope that the points we make will be useful in helping us as parliamentarians to chart a new course for the people of Canada and correct some areas which are badly in need of correction. I agree with the Minister that the taxpayer must be convinced that the system is fair to all. The taxpayers are not so convinced, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, as late as Monday of this week, in Prince George, British Columbia, a very distinguished and prominent Canadian, Mr. John Turner, said that he has read the Progressive Conservative task force report and that if he is put into a position of authority, he will see that the administration of the Act is brought back into unquestioned equity and fairness.

I do not want to project myself into the Liberal leadership race; there are enough people already in it. However, I do want to say that I hope during the course of the leadership race other candidates will also make such frank statements. As for the Minister, I want to suggest to him that if the House continues it appears he may have some support for his position; and if the House does not continue, our Party will form the next Government and he will then see some action.

Since last year we have seen and heard growing evidence to the effect that Canada's tax collection system, once one of the most fair and effective in the world, has deteriorated very badly. We have received complaints from a wide spectrum of our population that a new hard line approach to the administration of the Income Tax Act was leaving an angry trail of taxpayers who have become disillusioned with the system and are demanding justice and fair play from their Government.

● (1240)

Last September the Canadian Chamber of Commerce warned there was a clear perception across the country that Revenue Canada was becoming more and more aggressive in its attitude towards the assessing and collecting of income taxes. Notices of objection filed by taxpayers jumped by 36 per cent. Significantly, over 70 per cent of all notices filed were settled in whole or in part in favour of the taxpayer. There was more evidence. In November of 1983 every chartered accountancy firm in the city of Cambridge, Ontario, signed a letter alleging that local auditors were operating under a quota system. We all know of the debate that ensued from that allegation and we all know of the results.

When the Government rejected the idea of a full parliamentary inquiry proposed by our Leader, he set up a task force to