

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised at the Hon. Member's question, and especially at the way it was formulated. First of all, I have already informed the House that as soon as I receive Mr. Farlinger's final report, I shall table it in the House and it will be made public.

I would also like to say, in answer to the Hon. Member's question, that Mr. Farlinger is busy assembling a multi-disciplinary team that will examine the very considerable mandate he has been given for his study, and as soon as that is finished, he will start on the actual study.

Still in answer to the Hon. Member's question I intend to meet Mr. Farlinger next week, if possible, to discuss how he is to keep me informed and advise me of the progress of his study. I may add it is not a matter of having secret reports. The purpose of this study is to correct certain situations, if necessary, and to do so as quickly as possible. The reports will probably be in the form of discussions and advice given at meetings between Mr. Farlinger and myself.

[English]

REQUEST THAT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE BE ESTABLISHED

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, what we have is an indication that there will be no formal reports that might even leak into the public. Not only will the Government not release them, they might not even be leaked. There will just be discussions between the Minister, who is the man most guilty with respect to what is going on in the Tax Department, and his investigator.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): The Minister tells us that he will submit a final report to the House. He has already said that that final report will not be ready for a year. In a year's time, that Minister will not be in this House of Commons.

This issue is far too important for the Government to carry on another coverup. I ask the Minister whether he has the courage to recommend to his House Leader that there be established a special parliamentary committee to look into this question which is daily causing pain and outrage to constituents across the country. I have a letter here. Every member of this House is receiving correspondence every day talking about the rudeness, abuses, and pressures being brought upon individual Canadians. Why can we not have a parliamentary committee to look into this question? Why is there a coverup?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I may remind the Hon. Member that if he really feels that certain situations must be corrected, and if he honestly wants such corrective action to be taken quickly, he must agree that it is important for me to get advice as quickly as

possible and to be able to discuss the matter with my senior officials in order to correct the situation, if necessary.

I also wish to point out to the Hon. Member that he is not only attacking the reputation of a person who has just been entrusted with the responsibility for a study but also the reputation of the firm that will be conducting the study. If the Hon. Member does not trust Mr. Farlinger and Woods Gordon, he should come right out and say so.

I myself am confident that these people are honest, that they are competent professionals who will do a thorough job, and that Mr. Farlinger's report will contain his findings and recommendations, and that report will be made public.

The next point, Mr. Speaker—and here we have the megaphone for the Leader of the Opposition—

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: Why not a parliamentary committee?

[Translation]

Mr. Bussières:—suggesting a Parliamentary Committee, which is my next point. Mr. Speaker, I have already said that I wanted an investigation and speedy action if I am advised on short notice that certain situations should be corrected. The approach we have selected is to obtain advice quickly so that with departmental officials, we can take steps to correct any situation that, according to Mr. Farlinger, ought to be corrected.

[English]

MINISTER'S POSITION

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, the Minister wants rapid action, but he will not get the report for a year, so it is going to be "rapid" a year late. That will not help the thousands of Canadians who are now victims of his Department.

The Minister has had advice. Advice has been coming from all corners of this House for a month now. All he has done is appoint an investigator who gives him secret reports. This matter is too important for this Government to engage again in the kind of coverup that has become its trademark. I ask him again what he is afraid of. Why is he afraid to have the House of Commons of Canada look into this question which touches the lives of Canadians, indeed which touches the very trust which is essential to make a tax system work?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, according to the media, the Hon. Member has had time to go to academic institutions, I forget in what capacity. Perhaps he should consider dropping law and taking up logic, which might help him to straighten out his thinking, which has a tendency to twist the facts—