

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, January 19, 1984

The House met at 11 a.m.

● (1105)

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 62—NON-CONFIDENCE MOTION—  
TAXATION

**Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe)** moved:

That this House condemns the Government for its contempt for the taxpayers of Canada, which it demonstrates by the creation of a taxation system in the form of the *Income Tax Act* that is increasingly incomprehensible for individual taxpayers and, by its failure to end capricious and unfair practices of the Department of National Revenue.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as we begin this extraordinary day in which Members of Parliament from all sides of the House will have the opportunity to debate the issue of the Government's handling of the Department of National Revenue, I want to start with a quotation which I think perhaps should set the tone for the debate today. It explains fully what our responsibilities are in a democratic and free society when authority is abused by the state and its ordinary citizens and its Members of Parliament find that abuses have taken place. The quotation is this:

It follows that when authority in any form bullies a man unfairly, all other men are guilty; for it is their tacit assent that allows authority to commit the abuse. If they withdrew their consent, authority would collapse.

That quotation is from a book published by the Toronto Oxford University Press in 1970 called "Approaches to Politics". Its author is Mr. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the present Prime Minister of Canada. In that quotation the Prime Minister succinctly outlined the approach that should be taken by all Members of Parliament when they find abuses of authority have taken place.

In the course of the past several days we have found that there is an agency in Canada which has extraordinary powers that no other agency has. This agency has the power to seize people's personal records, to invade their privacy, to damage their reputations in the community, to empty their bank account and to confiscate their pay cheques.

What is this agency, Mr. Speaker? It is not the police. It is not the new civilian security agency. It is the Department of National Revenue. This one Department has been given sweeping powers under the law which no other agency, no

other individual in society has, and which impact upon the civil liberties of every single Canadian.

First, the powers granted to this agency are far too broad at the outset. Second, what we have found, in documented case after documented case, is that the Department has taken authority unto itself and has abused the grant of authority given to it by Parliament. It has abused it to invade the privacy of ordinary Canadians. It has abused it to affect a person's ability to earn a living. It has abused it to take away basic civil liberty. We found as well, as a result of a succession of cases which have been made public both in the press and on the floor of the House of Commons, that we have a Minister of the Crown responsible for this Department who is neither aware of what has been done by his officials nor does he care about

In our system of government, our system of parliamentary responsible government, we have Ministers of the Crown who are accountable in the House of Commons precisely to ensure that Departments are held to account and that the authority granted to the Crown is properly used and not abused; that the civil rights of ordinary Canadians are respected by the state and that the rights of ordinary people, the unemployed, farmers, small business people, employees, senior citizens, are not abused; that people are treated with decency, with respect, with dignity and with compassion. Yet what we have found, Mr. Speaker, is that in instance after instance this Minister has allowed or encouraged his Department to treat ordinary Canadians in a way that is simply intolerable in a free society.

What Members on this side of the House have been attempting to do over the course of the last several months, and what the point of this debate is today, is either to force the Minister to accept his responsibility to the people of Canada or to force the Prime Minister of Canada to find a new Minister who is prepared to do the job.

There is an essential question here. Is the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Bussières) the Department's spokesman to the public, their apologist when things go wrong? Or is he the public's representative to the Department, the ombudsman when injustices take place, the guardian of the rights of ordinary Canadians? We believe that is the role the Minister should be playing. Instead, we have found that the Minister has simply been a defender of the Department at all costs, often giving false information, information that he subsequently learned was wrong and had to correct. In all innocence he would give this information because he simply did not have the facts.