

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Shortly before Christmas, Mr. Speaker, I asked all district office heads to get in touch with each Member of the House to tell him or her that each district office has a special service staffed by officials whose responsibility is to answer specific questions from Members to whom taxpayers voice their criticisms or send requests for information.

I know that most Members on this side of the House responded positively to the invitation of district office officials and that those Members have been dealing directly with district offices to solve the problems of their constituents.

The Hon. Member would rather take the long way around—he is saying no. If he is lazy, he ought to admit it openly instead of trying to blame others! He is doing it the hard way, but he should understand that we receive hundreds of letters every day which we must forward to district offices for review of specific cases. Under those circumstances, it takes a lot longer to get an answer.

Again I extend the same invitation to him. If he wants to act effectively and assume his responsibilities, let him go to his district office and defend the interests of his constituents instead of shirking his responsibilities by writing letters.

[English]

SEIZURE OF COMPANY'S FILES

Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton): Mr. Speaker, that answer is simply not good enough. Butler Manufacturing Company (Canada) Ltd. is a company which was forced to spend over \$60,000 defending a non-action which is directly the responsibility of the Minister. That is why his answer is not good enough. This company was subjected to search and seizure by his Department, over 200 files were taken by force, and then were returned without any penalty. Before they were returned, however, the company had to sign a document agreeing “—that it will undertake no claim, action, demand, or proceeding of any sort against the Minister of National Revenue or his agents, or servants in respect to the search and seizure action”.

Can the Minister justify this type of action? Does he not believe that it is extortion? Does he not believe that it is blackmail on the part of the Government? What is he, or the Government, going to do to stop this type of blackmail by this ridiculous Liberal administration?

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the second question of the Hon. Member is more irresponsible than his first.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Never.

[Translation]

Mr. Bussières: He knows very well that I cannot comment on specific cases. In all likelihood, he would be the first one to rake me over the coals if I were to do that.

I have just told him that my invitation stands. If indeed he wants to fulfill his duties and prove that the interests of his constituents come first—and that does not seem to be the case—he should stop writing letters and washing his hands off the whole issue, he should go to the district office and explain his concerns and those of his constituents to our officials. He might be surprised to find out that the efficiency of Revenue Canada officials stands out in sharp contrast to his own inefficiency.

[English]

Mr. Jelinek: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has been permitted a supplementary at some length, and was allowed to cite from a document. I believe he has had ample opportunity to put his case. The Hon. Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone).

AUTHORITY FOR USE OF THIRD PARTY DEMANDS

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of National Revenue. Bearing in mind that there has been a wild increase in third party demands, why is it that persons under the age of 30 are showing up in banks with briefcases full of stamped but uncompleted third party demands, asking who has that particular account at that particular bank, and then issuing a third party demand? I should like to know who is the authority when there is simply a stamped signature? Where is the authority for that kind of demand on a person's account?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I have already had an opportunity to explain to the Hon. Member the procedures to be followed by taxpayers who owe money to the Department.

I also told him on several occasions that any taxpayer who receives a notice of assessment from the Department is welcome to explain to us the particular circumstances or personal hardships he is experiencing and that we are prepared to make arrangements with any taxpayer. When the Department has to take more drastic action, it is usually as a result of the taxpayer being grossly negligent in at least making an attempt to come and explain his predicament to the Department.

[English]

OFFICIALS' CONDUCT WHEN FILLING IN THIRD PARTY DEMANDS

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister suggests that he has had an opportunity to explain how we should make the approach. He is literally asking every