

Although I do not like to comment on things I said in caucus, I did give the Member the assurance that the Government was aware of the situation and that it had begun dealing with it by establishing the Farlinger Commission. Therefore, I gave him the kind of assurances that the Hon. Member suggests I quite rightly should have.

With regard to the comments of the Hon. Member himself, I do not know exactly what he said to the media. I take it his comments speak for themselves.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Kitchener was saying that he was fastening responsibility, not on the Minister, but on the senior bureaucrats. The Prime Minister knows better than anyone else in the House that the buck stops with the Minister, or at least he ought to know that.

Over the last three months the Minister has demonstrated a sense of incompetence which is very difficult to exaggerate. I do not blame the Minister. I blame the Prime Minister, for appointing a 15 watt bulb to such a responsible Department. Is the Prime Minister convinced, as a result of representations that have been made on this side of the House, that the Minister of National Revenue is not doing his job, and will he replace him?

● (1420)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I usually take such representations as advice to be considered, but when they come from a one candlepower brain, I do not consider them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

FARLINGER STUDY—PROTECTION OF WITNESSES' PRIVACY

Hon. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, in this age of enlightenment I would like to direct my question to the Minister of National Revenue. The Minister knows that there are many people, including departmental personnel, who would like to contribute to a clean-up of his Department's operation but may be reluctant to speak in public because of fear of promotions, their jobs, or compelling personal reasons. The terms of reference for the Farlinger study do not speak on this matter, and Mr. Farlinger, on Tuesday last, was not then able to give the assurance that anyone wishing to testify privately could be heard and guaranteed anonymity.

Will the Minister amend the terms of reference of the Farlinger study to state clearly that Mr. Farlinger and his associates can, for good reason, agree with anyone to hear testimony in private, or receive confidential communications, and keep secret that person's name and identity from everyone, including the Minister and departmental staff?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the terms of reference of Mr. Farlinger's study are very broad. Furthermore, Mr. Farlinger and his associates are professionals who have been sworn and will therefore preserve the anonymity of information they receive privately. I am sure that anyone in the Department or among the general public who wishes to testify privately may rest assured that his testimony will be protected by the rules of professional ethics and by the oath sworn by the people working with Mr. Farlinger on this study.

[English]

IDENTIFICATION OF WITNESSES

Hon. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister for his answer, and I indicate that Mr. Farlinger is an employee of the Department. This is not a commission; it is an investigation and study. There is no mention whatsoever in the terms of reference of his ability to hear anyone in private. When he briefed the Opposition on Tuesday last and was specifically asked, he could not give us the assurance that he could hear people in private.

The Minister must realize the difficulty of appointing people to investigate their own departmental operations. If he insists on such a course, surely he should see the importance and the desirability of isolating himself and his officials from the study in order to promote a full and impartial search for the truth, without fear on the part of those who can lend great information to the study. Will the Minister formally express his intent that witnesses can testify before the study officials, and that such officials can keep secret the names and identities of any such persons? Would he do that simple thing?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I think my answer to the Hon. Member's first question adequately covers what he just said. I explained that Mr. Farlinger and the people working with him have been sworn to preserve the anonymity of the information they receive and the people giving that information. I believe this guarantee covers any concerns the Hon. Member may have in this respect.

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[English]

EMPLOYMENT

SPECIAL EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES PROGRAM—INSTRUCTIONS ON DEALING WITH MPS' INQUIRIES

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Last Friday I asked a question based on information I received from a source in the Minister's department that 91 per cent of the Ontario Special Employment Initiatives Pro-