

Oral Questions

Every time we can make changes that save money and improve efficiency and satisfy 80 per cent of your customers, I think it is a good idea.

If the hon. member wants to represent the 20 per cent who are unsatisfied, I will represent the 80 per cent who are satisfied.

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, in my area there have been many closings and I have never, in all the time I have been a member, seen the protests by people, and rural Canadians across Canada. They are the strongest of protests.

In light of the fact that in some cases if it is good for one minister it is good for that area, if it is not in other areas of Canada.

Is it the minister's opinion that all these Canadians should stop their protests, stop their petitions, because it means absolutely nothing to him that the postal services across Canada are going down, that many thousands will be without postal services in the next few years, that this minister wants no more protests? Is it not worth protesting if you are not a minister?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member seems to be suggesting that the postal structure that was in place and appropriate to the society of Canada 40 or 50 years ago should remain in place today and no changes should occur.

Changes are occurring which customers by way of independent surveys are saying they approve of. They approve the service. We have an independent auditor so that every quarter we measure the effectiveness of the postal system operations and the efficiency has been increasing.

What is going on now, of course, is labour negotiations for a new contract and some of the leadership are finding it profitable to go out and try to make a political issue out of some of their concerns in the hope that they can achieve through political pressure that which they cannot achieve at the negotiating table.

I do not think the hon. member is serving her constituents or the taxpayers of Canada well by continuing to reflect just that point of view.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, my question deals with veterans and other Canadians who have been told that a beeper which summons emergency health services does not fall under "medical devices" in the goods and services tax schedule. This would make them tax exempt.

The Department of Veterans Affairs must consider this to be an essential service since it pays for the beeper under Blue Cross.

My question is to the President of the Treasury Board or the revenue minister. How can they justify taxing this device which can mean the difference between life and death?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the Canadian Legion is considered a non-profit organization in the area of GST and therefore would not be obligated to pay or collect the GST.

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, officials within the revenue department tell us that this is not so.

I would ask the minister, if this beeper is exempt, would he tell me where in the schedule of the proposed goods and services tax it says that the device is tax exempt?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. speaker, the hon. member knows that questions of this sort should be put on the Order Paper.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Jelinek: Mr. Speaker, the hon. members laugh but one of the problems with all of these members—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

An hon. member: I guess they do not want to hear the answer, Otto. Why don't you just sit down?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Lumsden.

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MERCHANT MARINE

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina—Lumsden): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Twelve thousand Canadian merchant seamen served their country during World War II. Approximately 3,500 are still surviving. Twelve hundred and fifty-nine of them