

Mrs. Marleau: Meanwhile, here in Canada his government seeks to impose a GST which will tax children—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Marleau: Their clothing, their boots, even the heat that keeps them alive in the wintertime. Will the Prime Minister, for the sake of Canada's children, today withdraw the goods and services tax?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the one thing that I expected from the Liberals—and I know that they have difficulty in resisting partisan cheap shots—is that they should have left the children out of this particular fight because—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: —the summit dealt with the world's neediest children and I would have thought that the Liberals would, for once, have the decency to stand up and applaud a measure in favour of the world's children that goes much beyond partisan politics.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): You know that, Paul. You know it.

Mr. Mulroney: The *New York Times*, Mr. Speaker, reported yesterday that:

Leaders from more than 70 nations came together here today in an extraordinary show of concern for the world's poorest children. The Declaration of the World's Summit for Children pledged the participating nations to work together in an effort to save the lives of at least a third of the 14 million infants who now die each year before the age of five.

This is an enormous human tragedy, particularly visited upon the poorest of the poor nations of the third and developing worlds.

I know that all members of the House support the Government of Canada in its attempt to help in that particular area.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Diane Marleau (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point. Even in Canada we have poor children. Do we want to create more?

On Sunday in New York the Prime Minister said: "The World Summit for Children has galvanized political will to help children".

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Is the Prime Minister prepared to show that he has the political will to protect Canadian children? Charity begins at home. Is he prepared to scrap the GST today?

[English]

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of the Prime Minister of Canada, the Government of Canada has shown political will in taking some 260,000 Canadian children out of poverty since coming to office.

Additionally, the hon. member refers to the goods and services tax. The Liberal members opposite, if they are honest, must recognize the fact that families earning less than \$30,000 a year are ahead with the GST. It is time that they were honest with Canadians in recognizing that fact.

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[Translation]

GST ON CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know whether the minister responsible for children has the necessary authority to implement policies that provide for the mental and physical health of our children. As an initial official gesture, will the minister explain to the Minister of Finance that the mental development of children is not the unique preserve of schools and libraries but is also and above all a matter for the home, and that parents would rather buy books for their children? Could the minister responsible for the mental and physical health of our children explain this to his colleagues and have books exempted from the GST?

[English]

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the first part of the hon. member's question as to whether or not I have the powers that are necessary to enable me to serve the children of Canada, the answer is yes. I am very, very pleased to say that the Prime Minister has asked me to co-ordinate on behalf of the Government of Canada the response to the World Summit. We have acted immediately by creating a children's bureau in the Department of National Health and Welfare.