

Supply

New Democratic Party had not campaigned vigorously enough against free trade and that is why we had a majority Conservative government.

I would like to remind the members of the Liberal Party that there are 12 more New Democrats in this House than there ever have been before. We more than held our traditional turf and the fact that the Liberal Party was unable to do so is the reason we have a majority government.

Nevertheless I would like to ask the hon. member a simple question. If the Liberal Party has been so absolutely and so consistently opposed to the goods and services tax in both Houses, why did not the senators kill the GST on May 3, 1990 at second reading, when they had the opportunity to vote against it in principle.

Mr. Manley: I think the Senate has proceeded with this legislation in the most responsible way, by considering the views of Canadians before deciding what it should do with it. I am sure the New Democratic Party has no objection to the fact that the Senate committee on banking and finance travelled from coast to coast in this country and heard the views of the Canadian people. And having heard the views of Canadians, they were able to assume the authority which, unfortunately, was thrust upon them by the government, through its irresponsible actions in forcing this down the throats of Canadians.

Mr. Scott Thorkelson (Edmonton—Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion now before the House.

Taken at face value, this motion appears to be about the government's economic policies and the supposed results of those policies.

What this motion really represents is the opposition's vested political interest in exploiting the gloomiest side of any and every economic issue. That is why the opposition is so desperate to have a recession declared before the full evidence is available. That is why it is so eager to turn the possibility of a mild recession into something far, far worse.

If the members opposite were weather forecasters, they would tell Canadians that if it's cloudy today, it means showers turning to steady rain, and then to torrential downpours, hurricanes, cataclysmic floods, and a huge upsurge in the ark division of the shipbuilding

industry. In fact, I can see rain clouds over the hon. members' heads on the opposite side. A little common sense perspective is really what is needed here today, not the opportunistic rantings we have heard about the economy from the opposition.

The fact is that the Minister of Finance made clear in the budget in February that the economy was in for a difficult year after several years of strong economic growth at a rate beyond the capacity of our economy to sustain. As the minister acknowledged in the budget, the possibility of negative real growth for at least one-quarter was very real as the economy and inflationary pressure that had built up were cooled down.

The opposition knows full well that this is the same basic pattern of economic readjustment that has followed every other time in which our economy has exceeded its growth capacity for an extended period. What the opposition does not seem to understand is that by acting firmly today, sooner rather than later, the government is ensuring that we avoid a deep and protracted recession. Have the members opposite already forgotten the devastating experience of the 1981-82 recession? The government has not forgotten its responsibility to see that that does not happen again.

I would like to point out to members opposite that if we had a recession in Canada in 1981-82, we had a depression in Alberta. The National Energy Program, in combination with the economic policies of the Liberal regime at that time, resulted in 45,000 to 60,000 people losing their jobs. People had to forfeit their homes when land prices dropped. Their mortgages were \$10,000, \$15,000 and \$20,000 higher than the value of their houses. At that time, the Liberal government literally pillaged \$20 billion a year for five years during the time one of the worst recessions that we have seen in this century. That is why the Liberals ran fourth in my riding. We have not forgotten that. If anyone knows what a recession is, it is the members opposite. It is a veritable depression which was created by them in the province of Alberta.

• (1830)

The motion before the House serves one useful purpose. It provides an opportunity for me to talk about the policies that the government has been planning and implementing since it came to office in 1984.