

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I know that you, as an Albertan, will be anxious to jump to your feet and say: "John Crow, you are hurting this country. Michael Wilson, talk to John Crow and let us have in Canada an interest rate policy made in this country that will help ordinary Canadians from one ocean to the other, from one part of this country to the other". We can do it if we have the will. We can do it if we listen to the finance committee. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, you get up on that chair and you throw off your robes and you make a speech with me. I am sure we can persuade the people in this House to agree. Why don't you give it a shot?

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hawkes:** Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of very quick questions to ask the member. Could he explain to the House, if he is so concerned about interest rate policy, why that was not the subject of debate last Thursday on his party's opposition day? Could he explain to the House why the NDP is so afraid of debating the goods and services tax in this chamber?

**Mr. Nystrom:** Mr. Speaker, there is a very simple answer to that question. Last Thursday, we were hopeful that John Crow would see the light. We did not think that John Crow would really increase the interest rates by 30 bases points. We had to decide at 11 o'clock the day before, which was a Wednesday, what our opposition day should be. We were optimistic that John Crow would see the light. In fact, members across the way were predicting two weeks earlier when the bank rate dropped in this country that perhaps we had turned the corner, perhaps the bank rate would come down. Then, of course, there was the effect on the Canadian dollar which, I suggest, was a good thing. The dollar started to come down a bit. John Crow panicked, the bank rate went up by 15 points two weeks ago and by another 13 bases points last week.

Now we are in a situation where we have no choice but to move concurrence on the finance committee report, led by the Conservative party chairman from Mississauga, supported by all eight members of the Conservative party who sit on that committee, the four Liberals and the two New Democrats. This is a unique occasion where

all three parties on the finance committee are in concurrence on something of importance to this country.

I am surprised that the whip of the Conservative party would even ask such a question. He, coming from western Canada, should know the impact of the high interest rate policy in his city in his province of Alberta. He, of all people, who has a little bit of political experience, must know of the unrest in the province of Alberta against this current government. He, of all people, knows that in Alberta his party, despite the fact they won all but one seat in the election a year or so ago, are now running not second, not third, but fourth in the polls in the province of Alberta. He, of all people, who has studied psychology a little bit, must realize that one of the reasons, aside from the GST and the general incompetency of the government, is the high interest rate policy of this government. He, of all people, should realize that, but perhaps I have over-estimated his abilities. If I have, I apologize to him.

**Mr. Hawkes:** Mr. Speaker, the member failed to answer the question of why his party is afraid to debate the GST in this Chamber, and I would really like to know.

**Mr. Nystrom:** Mr. Speaker, I have already said that one of the things that is relevant to the GST is the high interest rate policy. One reason why the Conservative Party wants a goods and services tax on Big Macs and on many foods eaten at restaurants by ordinary people is that they are trying to pay off the national debt. One reason for the national debt is that we have a high interest policy.

I want a full and free debate on the GST, not only in this Chamber, but a full and free debate of the GST across the country. I publicly challenge the government whip to a debate between himself and myself in Calgary. Let us do that in Calgary. Let us go to Calgary and have a public debate on the merits of the GST. If he has any courage, if he is really a representative of Albertans, he will get up and say yes. So I turn the question back to him: Will you accept a debate in Calgary? We will set a time, place and get ourselves a neutral mediator and away we go. Do you agree?

**Mr. Hawkes:** Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the House that I would be very happy to accept that challenge provided I do not have to wait until his speech writer