

arrangement whereby we would look at our caucus and find people not of our philosophical persuasion and see if we could not trade them to where they more properly belonged. I could see certain people figuring prominently in such a trade, certainly the member for Calgary Northeast. Certainly, my good friend from Nickel Belt would be sitting a lot closer to me physically. He already sits very close to me philosophically.

Mr. Rodriguez: To your left.

Mr. Simmons: He is to my left, charitably so, but a kindred spirit. If we ever have the trade, he will be much closer, I assure him. The gentleman from Calgary Northeast, of course, will soon have to make a move.

Lest this whole business be seen as being just a little too jocular, let me make the point. The point is that there are people in this House who, irrespective of party label, see this latest tax increase as the wrong way to go. I have real difficulty with it and with the rhetoric coming from the official spokesman for the Tories on this one. It is the gentleman from Calgary West who best summarizes the contradiction, when he, in effect, says that this increase to 13.5 per cent is our Thanksgiving present to you, it is our way of helping you. That is the problem with the whole mindset of this government. It does not, first of all, understand what the need is out there in the country. Therefore, how can it administer to the need when it does not understand what the problems are?

When I stand in this Chamber on behalf of thousands of fishermen and plant workers and tell government members that our fishery is on the verge of collapse in Newfoundland, for example, the minister gets up the same day and tells us everything is in a state of prosperity, to use his words. When the gentleman from my own province, the member from St. John's East, gets up and assures us, against the wishes of his constituents, I may say, that everything is fine and rosy in the fishery, I begin to realize that the Tories are out of touch with the reality out there, whether it is the reality of the fishing industry, the reality of the needs in agriculture; the reality of the unemployed or the realities of small business. They are so out of touch, is it any wonder that on this one they have this warped idea that somehow they are going to help us all by increasing the manufacturers' sales tax to 13.5 per cent.

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The Minister of Finance raves on about taxes and the need for tax reform. Where has he been for the last four and a half or five years when this tax has been jacked from 9 per cent to 10, to 11 to 12, and now to 13.5 per cent? The manufacturers' sales tax that government members have been maligning and rightly so, has been one of their chief tools for raising additional revenues during the last four and a half years. It is not the only one. They have had all together 31 tax increases. That is not bad considering they have only been in office fewer than five years.

Earlier today, we dealt with amendments relating to the business of gasoline tax as it affects fishermen. Once again, the fishermen and the farmers are making a very important contribution to our gross national product. Yet, who is it who is being asked to bear the brunt again? It is the good old fishermen and the good old farmers. It is another example of how government does not really understand how to keep people working. The list goes on.

Mr. Dionne: The government does not have a word.

Mr. Simmons: I am just getting a signal here from my good friend from Miramachi who always has better ideas than I have, so I steal them whenever I can.

• (1640)

Mr. Epp: It's not tough.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, the minister from Provencher comes briefly awake. We welcome him to the debate. We have been here all day, actually, trying to stop this nefarious scheme that the government is trying to push through. We welcome him to the cause. He comes late but he is here, and I thank him.

Mr. Dionne: In body, if not in spirit.

Mr. Simmons: He is embarrassed. If ever there was a man of integrity, it is the gentleman from Provencher. We all know that. He is embarrassed by this. How he still sits there and allows this double-talk to go on all around him, I will never know, the very double-talk we have been talking about in the last few minutes. There is one man, Mr. Speaker, that you and I, Sir, have predicted would have bolted long ago out of basic integrity. Basic integrity would have moved him to this side. Maybe when I am through, now that we have his attention and he is fully awake the minister will probably get up and rationalize this conundrum for us, why it is that the government says it is by increasing taxes that it does us a favour. That is a puzzle. I am sure it is a puzzle for him