

*Oral Questions*

government doing what it said it was going to do which is to re-establish confidence in the country. I am very confident.

Yesterday, Gallup polls found that the Canadian people had more confidence in the government's handling of the economy than any government in the last 22 years. That is confidence.

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[Translation]

**BOSNIA**

**Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Last weekend, the Bosnian President tried to meet the American President, Bill Clinton, to have the embargo on arms to Bosnia lifted. In the American Senate, a majority of Republicans and Democrats voted in favour of lifting the embargo, but the President is maintaining it for the time being.

Given the importance of maintaining the embargo, did the Prime Minister reiterate the need to maintain it to the President of Bosnia when they met?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I did exactly that on my trip to Sarajevo last June. Speaking on behalf of the French and the English, who knew I was going there, I told the Bosnian Prime Minister himself, in Parliament in Sarajevo, that, for us to maintain our troops there, it was vital the embargo not be lifted.

Our position of last year remains unchanged, and I am pleased to see that the President of the United States respects it.

**Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister's position is clear on the embargo, how does he explain the fact that, 48 hours before the start of the C-7 Summit, Canada has yet to decide on its participation in the rapid reaction force, which is to be debated at the G-7 Summit in Halifax?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have expressed the government's position, which is that we are not keen to take part in this new initiative. We have said so to our partners. We are still looking at the proposal.

• (1450)

We want to know exactly what form the force will take, what the chain of command will be and what the relationship will be with the UN. We still lack satisfactory answers on many points, and so are not prepared to make a commitment.

[English]

**GOODS AND SERVICES TAX**

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

The government has been restoring hope and prosperity by fulfilling commitments made in the red book. One of those commitments on page 22 involves replacing and eliminating the GST.

Will the Minister of Finance outline the progress that has been made with respect to the GST? Is he any closer to seeing this commitment implemented?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development -Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Don Valley North has shown a great interest in this subject, as has the Prime Minister.

As the member knows, there is tremendous support for harmonization among consumers and among small business. Already there are tremendous savings from greater efficiency.

The problem has been that a number of the provincial governments have not seen the same degree of urgency. I am glad to say that we have had a number of very fruitful meetings with a number of the provincial governments. There is no doubt that we are progressing.

In the last budget in Quebec, there was virtual harmonization realized. We have all seen the public statements of premier elect Harris to the effect of his interest.

When the hon. member for Don Valley North goes back to Toronto, if he sees premier-elect Harris, he can tell him that as soon as he names his finance minister, whoever he or she may be, I will meet them here in Ottawa, Toronto, Nipissing or I will meet the new finance minister in the member's office in Don Valley North.

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**TRADE**

**Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

It looks like the Clinton administration may prohibit Canadian companies that do business with Cuba from exporting to the United States. Such a move would infringe on our sovereignty and would violate key provisions of the North American free trade agreement as well as the WTO.

What is the minister doing to ensure that Canadian companies continue to have access to the U.S. market?

**Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this matter first came up when the so-called Helms bill came before the U.S. Congress.