

Government Orders

Mr. Simmons: I have just given the member, soon to be minister, two examples already and there are many other examples, if he would like to have them.

Mr. Hawkes: Do you know what government does? The Minister asked if I know what government does, or does he mean do I know what this government does? It is hard to keep track of what this government does. It doubled the public debt, if the minister is looking for some examples of what the government did. It went from—

• (1520)

An hon. member: You did it.

Mr. Simmons: It's my debt, all of a sudden. You should make up your mind. If I wasn't there very long, I couldn't have driven up the debt as much as you say.

An hon. member: That's right.

Mr. Simmons: You cannot have it both ways.

We had a good Liberal government in 1968, too. A good Liberal government in the period leading up to 1968 led by Mr. Pearson.

Mr. Speaker, you will know that I have all the time in the world. There is no clock on me at all. So, as long as members opposite want to get rid of their frustrations, I will indulge them. No problem at all. If I do not get finished today, I have tomorrow and the next day. This is a bill that requires adequate discussion and I intend to do exactly that.

The next issue is that the goods and services tax is fair and equitable. I shouldn't take him seriously. He obviously sat down this morning and said "What eight, ten or 12 things can I get up and say that will be most incongruous or unbelievable?" He talked about government management and all the great jobs the government is creating. They are all service jobs, as we know.

Now he comes to the question of the goods and services tax. He may believe that it is fair and equitable. That is not what small business is saying. That is not what the economists are saying. That is not what 80 per cent of Canadians are saying. They are saying the opposite, that it is the most regressive and unfair tax. Even if none of those were saying that, the member himself would know it is a regressive tax. He will know if one applies an across-the-board percentage at all income levels, it is *de facto* regressive because a larger portion of low incomes

is devoted toward essentials such as housing, shelter, electricity, food, and so on, than would be the case with high incomes. The goods and services tax is a very regressive and unfair tax.

Nobody is arguing that we should keep the FST. What we are arguing is that the Minister of Finance should go back to his undertaking of 1984 in which he said that a new tax to replace the federal sales tax would be fair, equitable and revenue neutral. We know he has flunked on all three points. It is not fair, not equitable and, of course, it is a tax grab. It is taking in several billion dollars more than the manufacturers' sales tax, the so-called FST.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières should not read these scripts without reviewing them to see if he believes them because I am sure he does not believe some of the nonsense he said.

We come to the next profound wisdom he uttered. He said that the big bad Liberals on this side of the House offered no alternative to the goods and services tax. I like to be fair, and I think I quoted him very accurately. He said that, and he nods his head to the effect that he said it.

Mr. Waddell: You are going to adopt the tax.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Simmons: I say two things to my friend from the NDP. First of all, his leadership is over and if he must get involved, just lean down closer so your mike can pick you up.

Mr. Waddell: I said the Liberals are going to adopt the tax.

Mr. Simmons: The hon. member for Trois-Rivières said that the Liberals have no alternative to the goods and services tax. First, the role of an opposition is to point out what is less than perfect about the government's policies. On the goods and services tax, we have had no difficulty whatsoever finding some imperfections. If we had done no more than that, we would have served our role as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Being the thinkers we are, we went a step further. We knew those big, bad Tories are going to suggest, that we have no alternative. We went out and got a few alternatives. Let me outline them for the sake of debate?