

*Oral Questions*

Parliament still makes the laws of the country, not the chief tax collector?

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

**Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Speaker, I have been accused, on many occasions, of skating around the issue. This hon. member appears to be skating on the offensive and he is going backward and getting nowhere.

The question that he has asked, I have answered previously on two different occasions. If he is talking about the fact that the House of Commons sets the agenda, draws up the laws, and creates the policies of the country, he is absolutely right. That is why the senators should abide by what the traditions of this Parliament are and pass the parliamentary agenda, as they are due to do, on behalf of the business community of Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor):** Mr. Speaker, a minister cannot possibly avoid responding directly to such an important question.

I would like to ask the minister whether he is prepared to tell us that it is not up to him to make a decision on that tax? It is up to the Parliament of Canada, namely the House of Commons and the Senate.

**Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Speaker, my answer is the same in French.

• (1430)

[*English*]

The hon. member is obviously skating on thin ice, to use the term which he has used in the past. I have answered the question very clearly. My comments on Friday were consistent with what we have been saying all along.

Since the member is so interested in this issue, I hope that he will support what the chairman of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce said. I quote Mr. Jack St. Clair: "We believe that business, because the GST is passed by the House of Commons, it has to be implemented now because business is not waiting. Any delay or any cancellation would have a cost effect on us now".

What we are saying to the business community is prepare now, because we believe the GST is going to be launched on January 1. The sooner you prepare, the

sooner you register, the sooner you can take advantage of the benefits accrued as a result of early registration.

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**SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance. The fiscal and monetary policy of this government and this Minister of Finance is killing small business. The high interest rates, the high dollar, and the complicated GST is forcing large pools of capital from Germany and Japan to withdraw and go home.

At what point in time does the Minister of Finance start listening to small business, realize that they cannot operate in this environment and withdraw the GST?

**Mr. Andre:** Contempt for the House of Commons.

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is saying that he is looking for leadership. I would suggest that he look within his own party for leadership.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

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

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** Here we have Jean Chrétien back in January 1980: "I don't think this tax should be implemented". On March 5, 1990: "It would be irresponsible for Liberals to promise to scrap Ottawa's proposed GST without offering alternatives". September 27: "I want the tax dead".

Last weekend: "We'll repeal all taxes. There might be a GST. I don't know the result". I will give you some examples. He said service should never be taxed. Then he said: "Already, I am in the process of forming a committee to look at the alternatives." They are just starting now.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** It seems to me that on June 23, he said: "We have work to do". He waited four months to form a committee, to talk about what the alternatives might be. Here he is thinking of getting the Liberal senators in the other place to stop the GST. Where is the alternative? "We have work to do. I am thinking of forming a committee within the party to start to look at the alternatives".