

Government Orders

I had a discussion with the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina who was talking about the importance of not rewriting history. If we look at some of the problems that affected the Soviet Union—

Mr. Crosbie: History is rewritten all the time. What tripe.

Mr. Langdon: The Minister for International Trade has finally been brought back to life. Above all, he is someone who would like to rewrite history. He would like the world to forget that he used to be a Liberal.

Mr. Milliken: He used to be on the straight and narrow.

Mr. McGuire: He was divided.

Mr. Crosbie: I was a socialist when I was eight or ten.

Mr. Langdon: If one reads the rumours correctly, it is possible that when he deserts that party he will want people in the future to forget that he was at one time a Conservative.

It is important not to rewrite history, either historically or in terms of law.

Mr. McGuire: What an inflammatory speech.

Mr. Langdon: I can see that the flames of rebellion are starting to burn at the very roots at the Liberal party. I can hear the concern. I can see the sense of outrage at its spokesperson's position.

When the hon. member from Montreal stands up, he will take a position against the retroactivity within this bill. I hope that position will be a strong one because we are trying—and I have dealt lightly with it at times—to get across to members of this House just how important the point of principle is in front of us. We are trying to get them to break through reading their briefs, to break through signing their letters, and to recognize that the point before us is one that cannot simply be casually passed through the House of Commons without a thought. Instead, this bill is at the very heart of our democracy and the rule of law, that is, the question of not passing legislation in this House that applies to the past. Who can tell?

There might be legislation when we have a New Democratic Party government, in the very near future I expect, which will indicate that the free trade bill was never even passed in the House of Commons, that it was not abrogated on six months' notice. A piece of legisla-

tion will be brought before this House by the New Democratic Party finance critic, trade critic, or Prime Minister which says that in 1988 we did not pass a free trade bill, that in 1990 we did not pass a goods and services tax, that this was something that never happened in the House of Commons. If that is really the principle we want to see applied, let me say that it will not be a principle put in front of the House by a New Democratic Party government, because we will not rewrite history. I urge the House not to rewrite the past, not to put a retroactive piece of legislation into effect.

[*Translation*]

I should hope so for the sake of the caisses populaires of the Province of Quebec.

[*English*]

For the sake of our principles across the country we will reject this bill and tell the Department of Finance to go back and rewrite it as it should have been written: as something to take effect at the time of a Ways and Means motion just like every other piece of financial legislation that comes before this House.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's homily with great interest. He appears to have taken the usual very righteous tone that members of the New Democratic Party take when they are about to shift gears and change their principles.

We have heard quite a lot of that in their support for the Senate, which of course I am delighted to see. Nevertheless that party urged for so long the abolition of the Senate, but its leader stood this week and said that she wanted the Senate, that undemocratic, unelected institution against which she and her predecessors used to rant, rail and rave and say how awful it was. As stated in *The Globe and Mail* this morning, "some of the former leaders must be rolling over in their graves at the words of the leader of the New Democratic Party". The sudden shift of principle, we are told, is not a shift of principle, but it was uttered in those same pious tones that we hear today from the hon. member for Essex—Windsor, which indicates to me that there has been a very substantial change in principle here.

The hon. member pointed out that perhaps our party had changed its view on this bill from the time in committee. I will go back to April 11, 1990, as reported at page 10502 of *Hansard*, when this bill came up for second