

*Supply*

operating surplus at all. The government had an operating deficit of, and I do not have the exact amount here, something in the order of \$17 billion. That left Canada in such a bad deficit and debt position that we have had to struggle ever since to get it back on track. We now have an operating surplus. We have had an operating surplus in the government's accounts every year. We are making a contribution toward the interest costs. When the hon. gentleman was last in government in 1984 no contribution was made toward the payment of interest but there was a deficit in addition to the interest payments.

• (1735)

Will the hon. gentleman explain to the House, has he had a conversion on the path to wherever he is heading? If there is a conversion, what is his hon. leader going to do about the fact that he is going to abolish the GST? He does not want to bother the Canadian people by telling them how the \$17 billion of lost revenue is going to be replaced plus the contribution of \$2 billion or \$3 billion we are now paying to the sales tax credit. Would the hon. gentleman explain a couple of these prickly little matters for us so that we will understand what might happen if his party ever sneaks back into power in this country again?

**Mr. Gray (Windsor West):** Mr. Speaker, when my party goes back into power it will not sneak in. It will march in probably with a strong majority because the Canadian people will have compared not only past Liberal governments but also the Liberal program with the nine years of this Conservative government. They will agree with us that this government will have been found, and has already been found, sorely wanting whether it comes to job creation, tax policy, or deficit policy.

My hon. friend has tried to pretend that paying interest by government is not an expenditure. That is absolute nonsense. Paying interest is an expenditure as much as any other kind of expenditure. For this minister and his government to say that if it was not for our interest payments we would not have this huge accumulated public debt is absolute nonsense. Just as it would be nonsense for an individual to tell his or her bank manager that if they did not have to pay interest on their

mortgage they would be solvent. That is ridiculous and the hon. minister knows it.

With respect to the GST we have been right up front with Canadians from the beginning saying that it is a bad tax. We agree with Canadians on this. But the revenue involved has to be replaced. The manufacturers' sales tax created revenue which the government said it was going to replace with the GST, a tax which it said was going to be revenue neutral and not one that would do anything else for the government's accounts.

I know the government does not want to account to Canadians for what it has been doing or not doing over the past almost nine years. It is trying to pretend that those years did not happen and other people have to explain what they are going to do instead.

Liberals are not going to let the government get away with this, nor will Canadians. It will be held to account. The result will be, as I said, a Liberal government marching into office with a majority, heads held high, proudly committed to rebuilding this country after nine years of Conservative destruction.

**Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, as I listened to my colleague from Windsor West I am reminded of the discussion he related to me some time ago. He had had a discussion with Senator Croll. I guess it was during his first campaign and he was getting some counsel and advice from Senator Croll as to what he would do when he was asked why people should vote Liberal. Senator Croll told my colleague from Windsor West that when talking to people in his community to remind them that when they vote Liberal they are voting for more jobs.

Looking at the record when the Liberals were in power over the years it is an indisputable fact that when people vote Liberal they are in fact voting for more jobs. That will be the central focus of our campaign in the next three or four months.

• (1740)

I want to get back to this NDP resolution. There are some aspects of this NDP resolution that I agree with. I naturally agree with the fact that the goods and services tax has been a disaster, as well as all the off-loading onto the provinces in terms of transfer payments that this