

Scrap it. Get rid of it. Bring us back something that makes sense.”

Madam Speaker, to fulfil the force of what I have been trying to put to you in the House and through the House to the country, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word “that” and by substituting the following therefor:

Bill C-62, an Act to amend the Excise Tax Act, the Criminal Code, the Customs Act, the Customs Tariff, the Excise Act, the Income Tax Act, the Statistics Act and the Tax Court of Canada Act, be not now read a second time, but that it be read a second time this day six months hence.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Resuming debate on the motion and on the amendment.

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to add the voice of the New Democratic Party to those 74 per cent of Canadians who have said that this unjust, unfair tax must go and it must go now.

The minister spoke about the fact that this is tough medicine but he has to do it. In my remarks today, I would like to suggest to the minister some of the real tough medicine that he might take in order to implement a real equitable fair tax system in this country that is not borne on the backs of the middle and lower income Canadians, but is shared fairly and equally in this country.

• (1630)

The goods and services tax is unacceptable because it rejects the fundamental principle upon which tax policy should be based, that those who have the means pay it. The principle should be that people should not be paying more than they are realistically able to pay and those who can afford to pay have a responsibility to do so.

The goods and services tax represents one of the most significant in a long line of Tory tactics which has meant a dramatic shift of the tax burden away from the corporations and the rich of Canada to the low and middle income Canadians, the unemployed, families living in poverty, seniors, working men and women. All these people are already struggling to make ends meet.

The goods and services tax is not only unjust; it is unnecessary. The message that I want to bring to the

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government today is that we in the New Democratic Party have concrete, realistic alternatives to this tax policy.

We cannot talk about the goods and services tax in isolation from the other economic and fiscal policies this government has put into place. It is an intrinsic part of the corporate agenda of this government. We have seen the U.S.-Canada trade deal, high interest rate policy, the clawback on pensions and family allowances, destruction of the unemployment insurance programs, and now the goods and services tax. They have all been part and parcel of that agenda, and Canadians are beginning to realize what this means for their daily lives and for the future of themselves and their families.

The fact is that the government's economic record is a record of economic mismanagement. Let us look at what happened in 1989 alone: There were massive lay-offs—the Canadian Labour Congress estimates some 70,000 jobs lost as a result of the trade deal—interest rates out of control; growing regional disparities; devastation in the Atlantic region; deepening poverty; food banks and homelessness.

Again just last week the Institute on Child Health pointed out that poverty has increased to the extent that there are certain regions, and it names specifically Newfoundland and Saskatchewan, where infant mortality up to one year is far higher in those provinces that have a higher rate of poverty. The link is very clear.

What does the government have to show for its efforts? An increasing gap between the rich and the poor, increasing poverty, and now a 7 per cent goods and services tax. Even in the years when our Gross National Product increased, the question arose as to who benefited from it?

It was not the people of Canada. They faced more tax increases than ever before. Their wages remained the same while their standard of living declined and they saw unprecedented reduction of crucial government programs and services. Now the minister is saying that he wants to see the workers of this country increasingly bear the burden of this tax.

In his remarks he pointed out that he does not want to see the workers asking for increases in their wages to compensate for this tax. Once again, the Conservative