

*Supply*

opposition to the current nonsense that we call the Senate.

People are having trouble this afternoon getting around the fact that we can both favour the abolition of the current Senate, acknowledge that it is there, and call upon it to do something the overwhelming majority of Canadians want done.

I would remind the Liberals that when they held up the free trade agreement in 1988, they did so when public opinion polls showed, roughly, on a good day that 50 per cent of Canadians were in clear opposition to the deal.

I have not seen a poll of Canadian public opinion with regard to the unemployment insurance bill. My guess is, as sad as it is to have to admit it, that the majority of Canadians are unaware of that bill now before the Senate. Yet it is being made the subject of rigorous action by the Liberal majority in the Senate.

With the GST we have a tax initiative by the Conservative government that is opposed by up to 80 per cent of Canadians. In the last poll I saw a clear majority, in excess of 50 per cent, wants it defeated in the Senate. It does not trouble them.

In an attempt to clarify the question of how one can both favour the abolition of the Senate and at the same time favour the current Senate's destruction of the GST, I would like to give the House a little analogy. I am hoping this will make it a little easier to understand.

Let us say you just bought yourself a house. It is a nice old house. It has clapboard siding, solid hardwood floors, high ceilings, and a big backyard. It is a beautiful place, but in the middle of that big backyard is the largest damn crab apple tree you ever saw in your life. You have nothing against crab apple trees, Madam Speaker. The little old couple next door when you were a kid used to give your parents delicious crab apple jelly every fall. There is lots of fun to be had in climbing big, old crab apple trees.

• (1650)

However, the trouble with this crab apple tree is that it is so huge and so obstructive that nothing much can grow in the backyard. It shades virtually the entire area, making a vegetable garden impossible, and its root system sucks virtually all the water and nutrients out of the soil so that not even a lawn can grow well.

As much as you do not mind crab apples, you resolve to tear this tree down. You want to put in a vegetable garden. You want a nice lawn. Having decided that you are going to get rid of the big, old crab apple tree as soon as you can get the money and time together to do so, are you being somehow dishonest, unprincipled or two-faced if you take advantage of the crab apple tree in the meantime?

Are you going to ignore the crab apples that the tree produces and just let them rot on the ground, or are you going to eat a few and maybe try your own hand at making some crab apple jelly? Are you going to tell your kids: "No, no, you cannot play in that big, old tree because some day we are going to get rid of it."? Are you going to refuse to seek shelter in its shade on blistering hot days? Of course not. That would be dumb as a bag of hammers.

In doing any of those things you are in no way abandoning your long-term goal of tearing down the tree and replacing it with a nice vegetable garden and a lawn. "Aha," some may say, "but what if in using the crab apple tree as it stands you get to like it or even cherish it so that finally all thought of tearing it down disappears," to which sensibly, Madam Speaker, you would reply: "Sure, I might like it, but I know I will like having that vegetable garden and that nice lawn a whole lot more. If I really got to like having a crab apple tree around, hell, I will plant a new one, but it will be smaller and in a different location."

It is just so with the Senate. The fact is that it is there. We can ignore it, but that will not make it go away. We can offer our perfectly reasonable and long overdue arguments to the effect that, in its present form at least, it ought to be abolished, but at present we do not have the power necessary to effect that policy. In the meantime it is there. In fact it does not matter a tinker's damn what we think of the Senate. It is there.

The only question is: It being there, will we call upon it to do the right thing for the people of Canada, an overwhelming majority of whom have identified a clear wish regarding the GST? Or, will we confuse principle with wishful thinking and try to pretend that the damn tree is not even there?

The alternative to myself and my colleagues in the NDP is clear. Again let me state and close with the obvious. The Liberals have a majority in the Senate. They can use that majority to axe the tax, to kill the bill, to get rid of the GST. Their failure to do so—I predict that it will be a failure to do so—can only in future be