

Oral Questions

I think the member in his own inimitable fashion has been an outstanding member and chairman, but he expresses his enthusiasm in ways rather more vigorous and descriptive than some of us would like.

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that he has made the comment that the goods and services tax is in effect in some 45 countries around the world—

Some Hon. Members: Forty-eight.

Mr. Young (Gloucester): I am just quoting the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, who said 45.

Some Hon. Members: Forty-eight.

Mr. Young (Gloucester): My question is this. One of the countries that does not have a goods and services tax is the United States of America.

• (1500)

I would like to ask the Prime Minister if he can explain to us now why he is not prepared to withdraw this tax, in view of the fact that the 10 premiers he will be meeting over the next couple of days have already indicated their opposition to the tax, and in view of the fact that our major trading partner, the United States, has not seen fit to impose a goods and services tax?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this is a sovereign nation and we impose the tax policies that we deem to be in Canada's national interest.

The fact that the United States does not have the tax does not impact in any way. The needs of Canada are entirely different. Our desire is to maintain the unique social programs, our regional development programs, medicare—all of the things on which we campaigned and were strongly re-elected. The GST will help us do that well into the next century. We want to do more for the people of Canada and this tax instrument is more modern, more effective and more just.

Mr. Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, I guess it is important that we can say that the GST is in 48 other countries, but it does not matter whether the United States has it or not.

In view of the fact that we are dealing with economic matters at the First Ministers' Conference, and in view of the fact that the premiers across the country—if we are going to talk about the sovereignty of Canada—have all opposed the goods and services tax, will the Prime

Minister indicate today to the House whether or not he is going to withdraw the proposal that is presently before the Standing Committee on Finance and allow for open and fruitful discussion at the economic meeting with the first ministers of Canada?

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, first, the member wants us run by the Americans, then he wants us run by the provinces. We will speak for Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: His good friend and former colleague, the Premier of New Brunswick, said at the premiers' conference in Quebec City in August that it would be the height of irresponsibility if the premiers came together for a couple of days and failed to come up with an alternative to the goods and services tax; it would be extremely irresponsible if all they did was try and denigrate the federal initiative. Premier McKenna was absolutely right. All they did was denigrate the federal level. They came up with no alternative.

We have an alternative. We believe it is very much in Canada's interests. We are stopping the negative and destructive attitude of penalizing production in Canada, penalizing the creation of jobs and we are trying to make Canada a much more competitive nation. I know at the end of the day my distinguished colleague from New Brunswick will applaud the Government of Canada.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Brian O'Kurley (Elk Island): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Honey producers in the riding of Elk Island depend on the tripartite stabilization program to ensure the success of their operations. While they realize that this program involves not only the federal government but also provincial governments, they are hoping for a payment fairly soon. These people are important.

When can the honey producers expect the payment?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I can advise my hon. colleague that there will be a payment made under the national tripartite stabilization program for honey. It will be in the equivalent of 8.8 cents a pound. The amount across the country will yield some \$5 million, more or less. The cheques are in the process of being issued now, so he can