

my deputy minister of the purpose of my visit. After that visit, I had been in touch with him on the telephone many times.

I recall that in this House the minister responsible for interprovincial relations gave the dates. I do not have them here. However, I called him many times. A week before the budget, he sent his deputy minister and other officials to Ottawa for a full day of discussion, as did every other minister of finance.

In fact, the British Columbia government decided to change the date of its budget in order to come up with its budget the same night as ours. The British Columbia minister of finance was happy to declare that he was cutting sales tax two hours before us. Of course, he did not mention the federal participation; that only came to light later. However, he was later reminded of that by the press. There was a lot of consultation. The best example of the consultation was that it was approved by his cabinet. He changed the date of his budget to be able to make the announcement a few hours before me. I have to be fair to him; he asked my permission to go on the air before me. I said that was all right with me, that I did not mind the political criticism that one receives.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I wonder if the minister can now turn his attention to the province of Alberta and tell us with whom he met there. How long did he spend with that minister? I want to get through all the provinces. How long did he spend and what arrangement was finally entered into with the minister and the province of Alberta?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Chairman, I forgot to mention that the first time I spoke about the possibility of cutting sales tax was in October. That is the first time it was raised as a possibility. I again raised it in January when I met the ministers of finance. There was more interest then than the first time. The first time, only Ontario and myself were interested. Eventually I got more support.

In the case of Alberta, the same day I visited the British Columbia minister of finance I stopped in Calgary. I talked on the phone with the Alberta minister of finance on that day. I remember the way I approached him. I said "Merv, I would like to help you cut your sales tax." He laughed because in Alberta there is no sales tax. That was just mentioned briefly on the phone so that he would be aware. Because he was not in a position to talk very much, I called him the next morning or afternoon. I again talked to him before the budget. Of course, they were not concerned about that because there was no question of cutting tax in Alberta since they are in the very privileged position that no one in that province pays any sales tax.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I am sure the minister and many people in Alberta are really laughing about that form of consultation. I now want to move on to Saskatchewan, my province. With whom did the minister discuss? He does not have to give us all the facts of his discussion. He has stated that he had a meeting with the finance ministers. I accept that as a matter of public record. I am more interested in knowing that specific consulta-

tions the minister had with each of the provincial ministers. With whom did he meet in the province of Saskatchewan? How long did he spend in consultation? What was the proposal ultimately agreed to between himself and his provincial counterpart?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member can drag this on for hours. I consulted with them. Later that afternoon, I stopped in Regina where I had a very pleasant discussion at the legislature. I remember well that when I arrived in Regina, the only person at the door of parliament was Premier Blakeney. He wished me well. We had a nice talk about many things. He had just returned from Banff. It was a pleasant sunny afternoon. When we met with the minister of finance, I had Mr. Neufeld with me. He was born in Saskatchewan. We spent some time discussing different matters. We did not only discuss sales tax; we also discussed monetary policies, the value of the Canadian dollar, the effect on the Canadian economy and how they reacted to it.

We discussed general policies in terms of sales tax. We spent a good deal of time on that. There was no great difficulty. One problem in Saskatchewan was that they had already passed their budget. That technical problem was eventually overcome. In Saskatchewan they consulted the cabinet. They even consulted their caucus on that.

I will now resume my seat and wait until the hon. member asks about Manitoba.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Chairman, we may go down in history as having the first buffoon as Minister of Finance, the way this fellow is operating now. He may want to talk out the time, but I have some very straightforward questions. If the Minister of Finance is going to act like a buffoon, that is one thing. We have a limited amount of time. I think it is reasonable to expect some simple answers from the minister. These are questions he can answer. I do not want a travelogue, I want specifics.

The minister spent a lot of time and effort in consulting. I am trying to determine what happened in each province. I now want to deal with Manitoba. I would like the minister to be concise. We are interested in knowing who was with him, but we can talk about that privately. I want specific details as to what happened in each province.

● (1752)

Mr. Chrétien: I would not ask the hon. member, who used some bad expressions, to use what we call the "cervelle d'oiseau". When I arrived in Manitoba I must say, Mr. Chairman, I had a very pleasant meeting. It was at the airport. The minister came to meet me at the airport. The name of the minister is Mr. Craik. We discussed the matter. It took him about five minutes to understand. It took the opposition here two months.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chrétien: After five minutes he had agreed. I recall very well because I had reserved a couple of hours for him and