

Oral Questions

hearts in 1984. We must respond with equal urgency and generosity now.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester): Mr. Speaker, the riding of Cumberland—Colchester, Nova Scotia is not an area of high employment and, in fact, has much seasonal work. Through the successful efforts of many groups of municipal development officers, provincial agencies, ACOA and other federal programs in co-operation with the private sector, this spring and summer we experienced the lowest unemployment rate in recorded history.

However, due to the seasonal nature of many of our jobs, it is absolutely essential that Bill C-21, now stalled in the Senate, be passed immediately. I call on the retiring Leader of the Opposition, as well as all the new prospective leaders, and all the Atlantic opposition members, to apply pressure on their colleagues in the Senate to quickly pass this legislation.

The senators involved need never worry about being out of work and requiring unemployment insurance, but the people in my riding do. A quick passage of this bill would provide a sigh of relief and a merry Christmas for the people of Atlantic Canada.

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VIA RAIL

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, there is considerable evidence out there to prove that the government has not been listening before or since making its cuts to VIA Rail.

A retired military man and his wife phoned VIA Rail in April, 1989 to reserve seats from Petawawa to Calgary to visit their daughter. They were told that VIA Rail through Arnprior, Pembroke, Petawawa, North Bay to western Canada was all booked up.

The Governor of Rotary International for District 704, who lives in Montreal, phoned VIA Rail about six weeks ago to make reservations two weeks in advance for a Paul Harris Fellow Night to be held at CFB Petawawa. He was told he would not need a reservation. Two weeks

later when he showed up at the train there was no room, so he had to cancel his visit and his speech.

The VIA Rail passenger service through the Ottawa Valley is so filled at times that people have to sit in the bar car because there are no other seats. The Ottawa Valley will be without passenger rail service because the government is cutting it out as of January 15, 1990. This is yet another cut to eastern Ontario. The Prime Minister said: "Use it or lose it". The fact is that it does not matter whether VIA Rail was being used or not, the government simply had it in its mind to cut. A public hearing into this issue must cover all these facts, because they have been unreal in many instances.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

• (1420)

[English]

PROPOSED GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, low income, middle income Canadians and small business will be the victims of the goods and services tax. They are going to pay the price, and now they know just how much they are going to pay. Canadians are faced with high interest rates, a high Canadian dollar, lower consumer spending and a disaster in exports.

Is the Minister of Finance prepared to tell the bare, unvarnished truth to Canadians? Is it the policy of the Minister of Finance and the government to drive Canada into a recession to ensure that there is high unemployment to satisfy the insatiable appetite of the Governor of the Bank of Canada for zero inflation? Is that what your policy is?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): The only straight answer I can give to that question is no, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to comment on what the member said in the preamble to his question. He said that low income Canadians were going to be the major people suffering from the goods and services tax. I do not know how he can say that when it states on pages 33, 34, 35 that a single individual over age 65 will be \$139 ahead after the goods and services tax. A one-earner couple, with two children, earning \$25,000 will be \$395 ahead. A two earner couple, with two children, earning \$30,000 will be