

Oral Questions

Canadians will be well protected and benefit from the withdrawal of the regressive tax we now have.

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of State for Finance is just as naive as his boss the Minister of Finance. Indeed, yesterday the Minister of Finance finally admitted that despite his budget forecasts he was not in a position to guarantee that the Canadian consumer would benefit from the removal of the old tax.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, don't you love it? The Minister of Finance and his colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, are going to hire 4,000 new tax police to police this new sales tax, but they will not hire anybody to make sure that the consumers of Canada get the benefit of the old tax.

Let me ask the minister about another aspect of this absurdity that he has brought before the House of Commons. The Minister of Finance, yesterday, claimed that he needed a massive advertising campaign, paid for by the very taxpayers who are going to be hit by the sales tax, to justify his new goods and services tax. He claimed yesterday that he needed this propaganda campaign, "so that Canadians would know the truth" and I am using his words, and "so that they would know all the facts".

• (1420)

Let me ask the Minister of State for one simple fact and one simple piece of truth: exactly how much is this propaganda campaign going to cost? Does the Department of Finance really intend to spend \$9 million plus in a propaganda campaign because of the failure of the Minister of Finance, of his colleague the Prime Minister and the rest of the largest cabinet in Canadian history? They can't sell it in Parliament. They can't sell it in the country. Now they are going to spend taxpayers' dollars to try and sell it by an advertising campaign.

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Privatization and Regulatory Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent upon the government to inform the Canadian people of the new system. This government intends to do that in the most economical way possible.

I cannot give the right hon. Leader of the Opposition a dollar figure right now, but I can assure him that the information that will be provided will be factual information, the type of information that the Canadian public is demanding and, as a matter of fact, the type of information that the Standing Committee on Finance said should be forwarded to the Canadian people.

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Let's start focusing on Brampton, Mr. Speaker. The Minister says that it is going to be factual information. Will these truthful ads say that Canada will be the only country in the world with two separate retail sales taxes? Will these ads say that the new GST will break every one of the commitments and rules set forth by the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister during the election campaign? Will the ads say that the consumers won't benefit from the suppression of the old manufacturers' sales tax? Will the ads say that the government is hiring 4,000 new tax police to administer and monitor and gouge the Canadian people through this tax? Is this what these ads will say?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Privatization and Regulatory Affairs)): Most of what the right hon. Leader of the Opposition said is just not true, and he knows that full well. As a matter of fact, during the last campaign this government tried to debate sales tax and the right hon. Leader of the Opposition said we are trying to avoid the free trade debate. You cannot have it both ways. That is exactly what he did during the campaign and he remembers that very well.

The information that will be provided will be factual. It will not be the glory advertising back in the halcyon days of the Liberal Party when we had geese flying across the television set.

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TRANSPORT

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport. Can the minister tell the House and the Canadian people whether he was aware that last summer the acting chairman of CNR, Mr. Brian Gallery, a personal friend of the Prime Minister and also president of the Tories exclusive fund raising operation, was in a position of conflict of interest?