

be careful because some senators have been objecting to my provision of background information. It has been a long time since we have had a Question Period. I have three areas on which I want to ask questions, but I will only ask one at a time so that other honourable senators, who have also been waiting a long time, may have an opportunity to ask questions.

I have received many inquiries about the administration of the GST. I would like to ask the honourable minister if the regulations are ready or will be ready by a reasonable date, such as December 1, 1990, so that people will be capable of complying with the regulations, if this bill is passed, that will be used to administer it or will we have a problem like the one we had with the Official Languages Act?

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations):** Honourable senators, I must give the honourable senator the same reply I gave Senator Molgat earlier. I am not at this moment in a position to answer his question about the regulations under Bill C-62, but I shall make inquiries of the Department of Finance and will certainly bring forward a reply before the debate on Bill C-62 has concluded.

**Senator Olson:** If the regulations are not ready, could the minister tell us what information is used to provide answers to callers of the toll-free number? Replies are being given, but they are not consistent. I have been told that one can be given two or three different replies to the same question in the same hour. Therefore, if the regulations are not now ready, what is the basis for these replies that are being given to the people calling the toll-free number?

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, I have not had a report on the operation of this telephone information service for some time. I suspect that most of the inquiries have to do with the taxation of particular commodities and services, input tax credits, and so forth, which are already covered in the proposed legislation. If the honourable senator could cite specific examples where conflicting information is being given from various telephone lines in response to the same inquiry, I would appreciate having that information so that I may convey it to the Department of Finance.

**Senator Olson:** Honourable senators, my problem is somewhat deeper than that. If the minister says that the regulations are not now ready, what is the basis for giving any information?

**Senator Murray:** To correct the record, I did not say that they were not now ready. I said I would inquire of the Department of Finance as to the state of play and whether they can be made publicly available, and that I would get back to the honourable senator. That was my reply to his first question.

**Senator Olson:** I guess it was something like that. I think you hedged on whether or not you were going to admit that the regulations were ready.

I hold in my hand an advertisement, paid for by the Government of Canada, headed "Questions about the GST and Prices?" and says:

[Senator Olson.]

If you're asking how the proposed GST will affect prices, we're here to tell you. Call us toll-free Monday to Friday 9am-9pm.

Then it gives the telephone number. It then says "The answer is to call your GST Consumer Information Office." I will read the number into the record. It is 1-800-668-2122. Apparently all information is available there. I will provide you with some inconsistent answers. I do not know how I am going to do it, because the people I have heard from have not made tape recordings of their telephone conversations. I hope the minister is not asking me to do that; but inconsistent answers have been given. I hope he will tell us tomorrow if the regulations applicable to the administration of the GST on January 1, 1991 are now ready. If they are not, then I think people would like some explanation of why you are passing out information that is not authentic or official.

● (1620)

**Senator Murray:** The first question the honourable senator asked was whether the regulations were ready. I replied by saying that I would make inquiries and let him know. That answer stands.

## UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

### EXTENDED MATERNITY BENEFITS—DATES OF AVAILABILITY TO WORKING WOMEN—GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**Hon. Stanley Haidasz:** Honourable senators, I too should like to ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate the following important and pressing question: Can he tell us today whether he has made the representations that I think he promised to make to his colleagues in the cabinet to take into consideration the requests of those Canadian women who have been paying upgraded unemployment insurance premiums and who delivered babies before we passed Bill C-21? They feel that they should be paid retroactively the extra maternal benefits that are provided for in that legislation.

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations):** Honourable senators, I had thought that the Deputy Leader of the Government brought in a reply to Senator Haidasz's question. If I am wrong, I will undertake to obtain a reply as soon as possible.

## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

### APPOINTMENT OF AMBASSADOR TO IRAN—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Hon. Eymard G. Corbin:** Honourable senators, I should like to preface my remarks by correcting a statement I addressed to Senator Murray on October 26, 1990. In the course of my questioning, I said: "In recent days Iraq and Iran have rejoined forces against outsiders to the Gulf incident." I never meant to say that. I had something else on my mind and my tongue galloped ahead of my thoughts. I withdraw that statement, because it is a non-truth.