

Oral Questions

own these resources and have the right to use them to develop their province and promote the well-being of the local population.

[*English*]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, this is hardly the minister to tell me what is good for western Canada. I can tell him what is good for western Canada, because I have been fighting for it—

Mr. Hawkes: You gave in.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

An hon. member: We'll see after the next election, Jim.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): I have a very basic question for the minister. He says that he has to balance between the rights of the market-place and the rights to defend the public interest. We know that the government has been giving all kinds of power to the market-place. What powers are possibly remaining under the National Energy Board to protect the public interest? Who is going to have any authority to exercise judgment about what is the long-term interest of Canada? I remind him that it is Canada we are talking about, not a bunch of provinces.

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I think the National Energy Board, first, has all the confidence of the government to make that judgment, and it has all the tools to make sure that its judgment will be based on something good for Canadians. It has all it needs to protect the environment of the country and to protect the national security for energy. The National Energy Board has all of that and it knows one thing for sure—

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): You've taken its tools away.

Mr. Masse: —which the member does not seem to remember, that is that natural resources are owned by provinces. People who want to develop those natural resources have a right to do so. I think that people who live in Alberta have a right to develop their province and their own well-being based on the natural resources. They want to trade, not just for you but for them too.

[*Translation*]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. The Minister of Finance was in Montreal yesterday and kept up his mean-minded attack against Canadians who object to his GST legislation. He said seniors are behaving like children. He asked Canadian workers to be less greedy. Here is my question: Will the government ask the Minister of Finance to apologize to Quebec seniors and to Canadian workers whom he accused of being too greedy?

[*English*]

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Privatization and Regulatory Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is in Montreal for two days of meetings with various groups.

There was a request that seniors meet with the Minister of Finance in Montreal. That meeting was arranged. The seniors arrived at the meeting, made a statement and left. They did not stay to listen to the Minister of Finance discuss the various positions on the goods and services tax.

The positions include the fact that 84 per cent of seniors will receive some form of tax credit rebate from the goods and services tax and that in fact a very large portion of them will be far better off after the goods and services tax comes into place.

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the Minister of National Revenue told us that small business supported the tax when every indication in the country is that a vast majority of small business people oppose the tax.

The Minister of Finance went to Montreal and insulted senior citizens of the country by refusing to listen to them. He told them that they were behaving in a childish way. The Minister of Finance told workers in the country that they were too greedy.

My question is very simple. Is the Minister of Finance going to be asked by the Prime Minister and by the government to apologize to Canadians whom he attacks if they oppose his favourite hobby-horse, the goods and services tax?