

Government Orders

Mr. Riis: My friend says the government is doing that. I see woefully little evidence of that. I am saying what the premiers said: "Let us fight this war on unemployment. Let us fight this war on poverty by taking some major action".

This is one use of this GST surplus fund that could be directed in that direction.

We could talk about child care and the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of children in this country who are in desperate need of decent child care. Single parents have to work. Both parents have to work. Parents have to work late in the day and commute long distances and so on. Children are at home on their own. We all know the scenarios. We need to have more emphasis put on child care to allow those families to move forward positively.

I could stand here and go on all day listing point after point of all of the things people feel we ought to be doing today. I could go on saying that the revenues from the GST could be earmarked for those kinds of programs. It is sort of evident and rather obvious for most Canadians. I think Canadians, on balance, would buy the fact if we said: "Listen, the government has decided in its wrong-headed way to collect this GST. At the moment we in the opposition cannot do anything about it other than point out the folly of that decision". But the government at least for the next few months while it is in power is going to go ahead with that. I might say that the minute the NDP gets into office we are going to stop that tax completely. At the moment, however, we are stuck with the situation.

Mr. McDermid: What will you replace it with?

Mr. Riis: My hon. friend asks a fair question: "Replace it with what?"

Why not start off with a minimum corporate tax? That is something that the United States has introduced and we could do that. Let us start off with a wealth inheritance tax for those families that inherit, let us say, \$20 million. Let us have people pay a little bit of tax on that.

We could go on and on with a whole set of initiatives that have been made clear time and time again that we could use in lieu of the GST. But if we are going to have that, why not use some of the revenue generated by the GST to help Canadians, to help get the economy stimulated back into life, to bring some peace and security to Canadians and to Canadian families and to

enable families to progress in a more positive way by having a decent child care system.

What about what is going on in our hospitals across this country? The federal government has decided to off-load its responsibility on to other levels of government. We are seeing hospitals closing down holus-bolus or closing wards and beds. This is a serious situation.

Finally, what about education? I think we are all in agreement and it is universal in the country that the best investment we can make is in retraining and education to ensure that our Canadian people have the best skills and expertise possible to face the demands of the knowledge-based economy of the 1990s.

All this amendment really says is that rather than locking us in so that all of that money has to be spent only on debt and deficit reduction, let us keep the option open so that some of that GST money can be put into worth-while projects, into investments into the future of Canada, and into investments into the future of Canadians.

I think people would support that notion and I would encourage my colleagues on both sides of the House to support this amendment.

Mrs. Diane Marleau (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, I am especially pleased to get up and speak to this bill and to this amendment.

Before I get right into the amendment and exactly whether I believe that it is a necessary amendment or not, let me remind everyone that all moneys that come into the government go toward the deficit and then the debt. All programs go into creating the deficit. Because what it means is that we are spending more than we are taking in.

It makes no real difference what account you place the money in. If you are not bringing in enough then you are going to have a deficit no matter what kind of games the Conservatives want to play. That is what the deficit means. It just means there is not enough money coming in.

On the other hand, to relate to the amendment of my colleagues, I do not believe that this in any way prevents the government from spending moneys in other areas. All it says is that we will take the moneys, the net proceeds from the GST, the sale of Crown corporations and the fire sale of the Conservative government on Canadian properties and we will place them in this other account. We are going to call it a deficit reduction account.