

• (1430)

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I will assume that the Deputy Prime Minister is not referring to the women of Canada as dissidents simply because they are putting forward their point of view and wanting to protect their rights.

I also want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he knows that Manitoba is required by its constitution to hold public hearings before any constitutional amendments can be signed. The premier of the province has said publicly that the province will hold 10 days of hearings and 10 days of debate. I would suggest, as Mr. McKenna has in his proposal, that all Canadians should have the opportunity to examine the companion resolution.

I would ask the Deputy Prime Minister if his government is prepared to ensure that all Canadians have the opportunity to have information on this companion resolution, using the same amount of time and effort it has put into ensuring that every Canadian household has something on the GST. I think the Constitution is important to the country. I ask the government today to say that it will put the same amount of effort into explaining this companion resolution to Canadians.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I wish that the Leader of the New Democratic Party would not attempt to distort what I said. I did not refer to women as being dissidents; I referred to the three provinces that chose to take another course of action.

With regard to the other point in the question, I heard comments at the press conference today, and indeed in the House, that this was probably one of the most thorough committee processes we have gone through in this country for a long time. I think there were 160 witnesses who appeared. It has been a broad-based public hearing on the issue. What is at issue today is the responses of those provinces which have chosen not to support the Meech Lake Accord in its original form.

I am not in any position to dictate to the province of Manitoba, the province of New Brunswick or the province of Newfoundland what process they may want to set up in terms of how they want to deal with this. I would

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hope that the hon. member was not suggesting that in the context of her question.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and concerns the document the government has sent out entitled: "Some straightforward answers about the goods and services tax and what it means to you".

This flyer tells consumers and I quote: "Once this new system is in place the price of many manufactured items will drop".

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacLellan: This is very interesting because the Department of Finance has already said that 76 per cent of consumer and commodity categories will actually show an average increase in price once the GST is in place.

I want to ask the government, and the minister, how they can possibly justify sending out this misleading propaganda at the taxpayers' expense.

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs) and Minister of State (Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am a little bit surprised because the hon. member sits on the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations.

Last week and this week witnesses from Sears, Ford and GM appeared before the committee and said that they are going to pass the reduction in tax from 13.5 per cent to 7 per cent on to Canadians. Even the president of the Consumers' Association of Canada, Mr. Murray, said that he is satisfied with the way the government managed the situation.

We should ensure that Canadians are well informed on the situation and have the facts. They will then be able to make their own decisions. We are sure they will benefit from the changes in the tax which we will have at the beginning of January.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, the government is informing Canadians all right, but it is giving them the wrong information.