

have certain principles, but if they are out of fashion, I am certainly willing to change them.”

I happen to believe that the free enterprise system is good. There are people in the Chamber who will say to me: “For heaven’s sakes, your home province has embraced socialism. Maybe you should be a socialist.” I say that time will tell whether I am correct on that or not, but I believe in the free enterprise system and I have an obligation to make that known to the constituents of my riding and let them make the decision. Once the decision has been made after I have fully informed people where I stand, then I have an obligation to act on it.

With respect to tax changes, let me say that the hon. member who proposed this motion was a part of the government. He knew as well as I and anyone who is interested in the subject of tax reform that it was a proposal of the Progressive Conservative Party in the election of 1988 to overhaul the tax system. On every public platform, we were all asked questions on this, and I did not shrink from answering with what I believed was the position of the Progressive Conservative Party, which is what we have implemented. To those people who say to me “You know, the GST is not popular.” I say, “Look, I will tell you why I support the present legislation. Because the manufacturers’ sales tax is a bad tax. I am opposed to a tax system that encourages job creation in Rochester, encourages job creation in Chicago and not in Canada. That is why it has to be changed.” Assuming that the MST is a bad tax, this is not a popular tax. I have to agree with people who say that. I do not like taxes. When I pay my municipal taxes, I am not too happy. When I pay any tax, I am not too happy. But it is one of the facts of life.

• (1330)

I heard a radio announcer ask people what they thought heaven was going to be like. When I get to heaven, I expect to see many similarities between Canada and heaven. One of the exceptions will be taxes. Taxes will not be there. They are a part of life here in Canada.

This government was elected not just to take popular decisions. We are here to take tough decisions. Mr. Speaker, you will remember in 1984 when this government was elected. In the newspapers the next day, they said: “If this was a mandate for anything, it was a

Private Members’ Business

mandate for the Mulroney Conservatives to make tough decisions.” We saw where easy decisions led us. With the previous government we saw where easy decisions were leading this country inevitably, into bankruptcy. Those were the easy decisions. Our job was to make the tough decisions. I say to members of this House that we have a responsibility to be sensitive, we have a sense of responsibility to inform ourselves as to what our constituents think we should be doing and we have a responsibility to be honest. Ultimately, our responsibility, as Edmund Burke said, is to use our judgment in the implementation of public policy. This is what this government has done these past six years. I have been very proud to be a part of this government and to be a part of this great parliamentary system.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate on the motion introduced by the hon. member for Calgary-Northeast.

[*English*]

I can sympathize with the statements that the hon. member made concerning the advisability of proceeding with a referendum. I must say at the outset that I believe referenda are foreign to our system of parliamentary government. I choose not to support the motion in spite of the sympathy that I feel for his position.

It is important that we in the House realize the position that he has been placed in by reason of the disgraceful conduct of the government opposite which has the House to a position where it has to consider a motion such as this.

It is my view that we are debating such a motion because the level of competence of the government is so dreadful that people are looking for salvation outside of this House rather than looking for it here. They know the hard-hearted attitude of the government majority in this House. It is prepared to bulldoze the wishes of the Canadian people anywhere at anytime. It is prepared to bulldoze the opposition anywhere and anytime to have its way. Canadians are fed up to the teeth with it. They want this government out. They are willing to consider referenda.