

Government Orders

We are one of the biggest debtor nations, on a per capita basis, anywhere in the world. Canadians go out and borrow. In 1988 we had one of the most extensive high borrowing years we have ever had in our history. That was all Canadians, not just governments. In 1989, it was 27 per cent higher than in 1988, which was a record year.

What would the hon. member do in the face of that? She would lower interest rates, which would mean that the borrowing would go on until we became like Argentina and Brazil, until we have inflation rates like they have of 100 per cent, 300 per cent and 500 per cent. Then let her go home to her small business people and say that's good for them. Let her go to the senior citizens and say that's good for them. "You people here on fixed incomes, that is just good for you, because it does not matter that we have inflation rates of several hundred per cent. We have low interest rates."

That might be all right for the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. I think that is a very cruel and inappropriate way to put forward a financial policy for the Government of Canada, where there are so many people on fixed incomes, the indigent, the elderly, those who do not have the capacity to take advantage of inflationary factors and have the opportunity to put them in a position that she would advocate for them. I would resist such a policy.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Madam Speaker, I rise today with some trepidation, having listened to my hon. friend from Alberta. I was worried before I got up, now I am almost in a panic because of what he said. I feel exactly the opposite. Let me clear the air before I even begin my commentary by replying to the hon. member's suggestion that we do not have any alternatives as New Democrats as to how to raise additional revenues. I will tell the hon. member the following.

I did not hear him in his speech today say that we Conservatives like the idea of corporations not paying income tax. I did not hear him say that there were 69,000 profitable corporations in this country not paying any income tax at all. I did not hear him say that in the last year while personal taxes went up for Canadians by 16 per cent, corporate taxes went up only by 9 per cent, to say nothing about the additional excise taxes that people have to pay.

I did not hear him say that perhaps it is time for Canada to join the rest of the world with some kind of a wealth tax. We are one of the few countries in the entire western world that does not have some kind of wealth tax so that when you inherit \$10 million, you should pay some tax. I did not hear anything about that. No.

All I heard was that he believes we should put the GST into place so that no matter how regressive, cruel and brutal it is on people, they should pay more because they are not going to touch the corporations.

Canadians are asking why Brascan, with profits in excess of \$200 million last year, paid not a penny in income tax, when people working for a living in Red Deer, Lethbridge or High River will have to pay as much as \$2,000 extra because of the goods and services tax. Why does he not explain that?

I have this very uncanny feeling that the government is softening us up for the big blow, a poll tax. They are looking at Margaret Thatcher and they are saying that Margaret Thatcher jammed this goods and services tax in and now the next one is to put a poll tax on. I read the reports from the Fraser Institute, which is the bible for the Conservative Party of Canada. They are advocating a poll tax for Canada. They are saying that every single Canadian, regardless of their level of income or where they live should be paying a poll tax, just like the old Chinese head tax of years ago which we abhor in principle.

That is what is coming, just as sure as we are standing here. That will be in next year's budget, I suppose. Because if there is some way to move the financial responsibility of providing for Canada from the wealthy, the privileged and the large corporations down on to the backs of working people, that is what this government wants to do and a poll tax is an excellent way to do that. Look at Margaret Thatcher. There is a rebellion in the streets in London.

In Canada there is not a rebellion in the streets yet. But Canadians are just beginning now to realize that to stop the goods and services tax, they do not have to defeat the Tory government. All that is necessary is a handful of Conservative back-benchers who have the guts and gumption to represent their constituents in this House and vote against the goods and services tax like their constituents are asking them to do.