

Statements by Ministers

to management, a new approach in terms of its 8,000 employees, and a new approach in each of the 18 fish plants, the losses had fallen to \$20 million. As the Minister has stated, in 1986 the profits were in excess of \$46 million. This is a real tribute to what the public sector can do in the economy in co-operation with productive employees.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Riis: After the federal Government, on behalf of the citizens of Canada, and the citizens of Newfoundland through their Government, became major players and rescued these failing private sector companies, created employment throughout critical parts of Newfoundland, got everything on a successful path, the Government now decides to abandon it and return to a position in which the sole motive will be profit. Under a Crown corporation there were other aspects in mind. It wanted to create employment, and long-term stability to many communities, and that was done. Now with this particular act of privatization the Government is saying that we are going back in time, and it is using a regressive approach. Once again the important thing will not be the future of Newfoundland, the stability of the economy of Newfoundland, the security that it gives to the people of Newfoundland. The only motive that will govern this newly privatized company will be profit.

In closing, I wish to say that in a province of Canada where fishing is the number one industry and touches the lives of every single Newfoundlander, either directly or indirectly, some public participation is a very honourable and useful thing. For that reason, unless we receive substantially more details than these sketchy comments we have heard this morning, we certainly would find it very difficult to support this initiative. The details are non-existent, other than this small sketch, so we will have to look more carefully at this when the details are provided.

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THE BUDGET—TAX REFORM

DATE FOR PRESENTATION

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, at this time I wish to inform Members of the Government's plans for comprehensive tax reform, and for a Budget this year.

Members will be aware that the greater part of our pre-Budget consultations with Canadian organizations was concluded just before Christmas. My staff and officials of the Department of Finance have continued to meet with representatives of various groups earlier this month. Formal submissions on tax reform from many of these groups are still arriving. Many of these submissions clearly represent a thorough, conscientious, and detailed effort to deal with tax reform in a realistic way. We are reviewing these submissions in the same conscientious and scrupulous manner in which

they were researched and presented. I consider these views an important element of our tax reform planning.

We knew at the start that comprehensive tax reform would be a big job. As Members know, we are examining all aspects of the tax system, personal, corporate, and sales taxes. In light of the guidelines for tax reform that I released in October, and with the benefit of our consultations with many Canadians, we are making good progress toward a comprehensive tax reform proposal. I am now planning to bring forward the Government's proposal for comprehensive tax reform this spring. However, I do not believe it would be appropriate to defer a Budget for that long. I therefore intend to maintain the commitment I have made to put the budgetary process on a regular basis. I will bring down a Budget next month on Wednesday, February 18.

[Translation]

We are making good progress toward a comprehensive tax reform proposal.

Mr. Speaker, I am not planning to bring forward the government's proposal for comprehensive tax reform this spring. However, I do not believe it would be appropriate to defer a budget for that long.

I therefore intend to maintain the commitment I have made to put the budgetary process on a regular basis. I will bring down a budget next month on Wednesday, February 18.

• (1240)

[English]

As I have said in the past, it is sensible to present a Budget annually in February, sensible because regular timing of the federal Budget makes for greater certainty and orderliness in financial planning for the federal Government, for the provinces, for businesses, and for individuals.

Canadians who are planning their financial affairs should be mindful that some income tax changes proposed in the Budget may take effect at midnight the day before budget day, that is, at midnight on February 17.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, Canadians who are planning their financial affairs should be mindful that some income tax changes proposed in the budget may take effect at midnight the day before budget day—that is, at midnight February 17.

[English]

This provision will ensure that budgetary changes apply uniformly to all transactions made on budget day, regardless of where in Canada the transactions take place.

Let me sum up very briefly. I will table a Budget on February 18, and I will be presenting a comprehensive tax reform proposal to the House this spring.