

between newspapers and other printed materials. They argued that newspapers should receive the same treatment as magazines or textbooks, that they were in the field of opinion and that newspapers were, if I may again quote from one of the witnesses:

... the symbol of freedom of speech and freedom of expression and therefore they should remain untouched. But they happen to fall into the category of the printed word. Therefore we are not splitting hairs. We say the printed word includes magazines, books, periodicals and newspapers.

That is the argument. What will the Senate think of it? What will the Senate say to the textbook question, the magazine question and the newspaper question? What will the Senate say to the competition which the Canadian publishing industry will receive from the United States?

I understand that much of the business they do depends upon the distribution in Canada of books that are imported from other countries. These will attract the GST immediately upon crossing the border. They worry about the burden of the inventory which they will have to carry before these books are disposed of. That is another effect which I am sure was not intended or foreseen by those who framed the tax.

● (1420)

I found it interesting that reference was made to the level playing field and whether a level playing field had been achieved in this industry.

In the magazine publishing business and book publishing business, Canadians face a competitor in the United States which does not carry a 7 per cent burden of GST. When it comes to subscribers and the whole subscription business, which is 90 per cent of our circulation, we will have the 7 per cent disadvantage. That 7 per cent disadvantage against our American counterparts, who already have the economies of scale that are 10 and 20 times as large as ours, will just add another burden to make it difficult to maintain a healthy or existing periodical industry in this country.

These are the main points that were made before the committee, and they were repeated in the committee's report.

There was no contrary evidence that I could find that successfully rebutted the main arguments that were put forward. It seems reasonable to us that an amendment, that would restore, in a sense, the status quo, that would protect or safeguard printed materials against the GST, would be appropriate. It would maintain a system that is presently in effect in Canada and, at the minimum, would give a fighting chance to the publication industry in Canada.

MOTION IN AMENDMENT

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I move, seconded by the Honourable Senator Frith:

That Bill C-62 be not now read the third time but that the Schedule of the Bill be amended, on page 342, to make provision for reading material by adding to

[Senator MacEachen.]

Schedule VI, and numbering accordingly, a new heading and Part as follows:

“READING MATERIAL

1. A supply of a book, periodical literature or other reading material.”

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion in amendment?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jacques Hébert: Honourable senators, how long can a government get away with pushing everyone around without listening to anyone, ruining entire sectors of the economy without the tiniest bit of compassion and jeopardizing our culture while ignoring the pleas of the authors, poets, editors and distributors?

“Quousque tandem abutere Catilina patientia nostra?”

In spite of the largest ever general outcry, in spite of the advice of experts in all fields and circles, including the business circles, in spite of the recession which will make even crueller the consumption tax, the Conservative government is stubbornly going ahead with its suicidal plan for imposing the GST at all costs . . .

In their hundreds of thousands of letters, phone calls and especially petitions, Canadians have sent us senators a clear message: “Elected or not, you are required under the Constitution to improve bills, whenever possible, or to block them in the case of repressive, unfair and immoral legislation.

It is therefore our duty to oppose with all our might the GST and to use all the legal means the procedure affords us to delay ad infinitum a vote on this bill. Each day, more and more Canadians understand the disastrous effects the GST will have on our fragile economy. Each day that goes by sees a growing number of Canadians oppose the GST, as indicated in the Gallop polls. In September 1989, 72 percent of Canadians indicated clearly their opposition to this flawed bill. Four months later, in January 1990, the opposition had grown to 74 percent. In the most recent poll, published on November 1st, 76 percent of Canadians say no to the GST, with a 92 percent peak in Atlantic Canada.

On this side of the Senate, we are determined to keep up fighting, to continue showing the people the negative impact of the goods and services tax. And one day, Gallup polls will tell us that only a very small percentage of Canadians are in favour of the GST. They will be the inveterate supporters of the GST. I would say that the names of Brian Mulroney, Michael Wilson may be, and Laurent Thibault, president of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, would be in that category.

In the next few days, weeks or may be months—who knows?—Liberal senators and probably some independents, may be some Conservative troubled by their conscience, will be denouncing the most odious aspects of this already infamous bill.