

Routine Proceedings

Can you imagine small businesses figuring out their purchase price and the tax paid? They are going to have to take the total amount, take out their calculators, divide all those figures, reprogram their computers—What a nightmare! It is a real nightmare. That is the Liberal GST? That is the improvement the Liberals had promised? Are they true to their commitment? The public will not be fooled. That is not what they had promised. They are in breach of an election promise, and this is a major breach too!

We are proposing an alternative. We are offering them an alternative. The world must have gone crazy, when the opposition offers ways to fulfil a government commitment. We told them, "If you want to abolish the GST, there is only one solution: to abolish it and leave this area of taxation to the provinces. Of course, there will be less revenue, but you can then tinker with the transfers to the provinces, especially in areas where there is a lot of duplication". Reducing overlap is also one of the goals stated in the red book. You could achieve several goals at the same time.

You are signalling to me that I do not have much time left, Mr. Speaker, so I will conclude by quoting from an article by Michel Vastel, a renowned Parliament Hill journalist, that appeared in this morning's newspaper: "Another solution mentioned by the committee"—which did not look at it because it was apparently not its mandate—"and recommended by the Bloc is to abolish the GST and make up for the shortfall by abolishing transfers to the provinces".

• (1625)

He goes on to say, "They would then eliminate at once a lot of duplication and a bunch of public servants. All this is obviously too simple and dangerous for a federal government that wants to raise its profile". He could have added, "that craves absolute power and control and constantly tries to confront the provinces". That is why the Premier of Ontario compares them to a gorilla. I would be ashamed to be compared to a gorilla, and by a Premier no less! But he is right. The people of Ontario should listen to their Premier because he is handling this very well.

I will conclude by saying that they are reneging on their election commitment and that the people of Quebec and Canada will never let them get away with it.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): After his eloquent speech in which he criticized the Liberal majority report, a disgraceful report that sets out to mislead Quebecers and Canadians, I want to stress the outstanding work done by the hon. member for Témiscamingue, and also by the hon. member for Charlevoix, on the finance committee and in developing our own position, which is the only valid one at the present time, the only possible basis for negotiating with the provinces, since the biggest provinces have rejected the Liberal majority report out of hand.

Although the hon. member for Témiscamingue mentioned this briefly, it made me wonder when the parliamentary secretary said earlier that we were the only country in the world with ten different tax systems, perhaps I may remind him that the Liberal majority's proposal would introduce not only a GST but also a business transfer tax. We already have two tax systems, which, multiplied by ten different rates, ten rates that are different from one province to the next, will make us the only country in the world with a Liberal majority that proposes having twenty different tax systems instead of ten. So much for improvements.

Again, I wish to commend my colleagues on their excellent work in developing the position taken by the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Brien: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for his comments. I would also like to stress the excellent spirit of co-operation we had here in the Bloc Québécois when we were working on this question and also with a number of members on the committee who belong to the Liberal Party and who disagree with their party's position but cannot do so openly because of the party line system, because they are gagged. I am also aware that my Reform Party colleagues co-operated splendidly during the entire process, and I want to thank them for doing so.

Where my colleague referred to complex systems, he drew comparisons with the situation at the international level. In fact, there is not a single country in the world that has this kind of hybrid tax, with one system for one kind of business and another system for another business. I attended all the hearings and many meetings and I travelled all through the provinces, but not a single person suggested alternatives.

Why bother holding public hearings that cost a fortune and waste a lot of taxpayers' money, if in the end, we do not listen to what is said. After only a few days, the committee was doing such a poor job that the Prime Minister had to tell officials at the Department of Finance who had spent a lot of time on the report that it was going to be put on the backburner. That is the kind of thing that is so discouraging to the public and makes people so sceptical. I am sure that the way the Liberals handled this question will not do them any good.

[English]

Mr. Hermanson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the caucus co-ordinator I would like to inform the House that according to Standing Order 43(2) we will be dividing our time.

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to share with this House the reasons why the Reform Party opposed the majority report on the GST.

Before I go into the substance I would like to go on record as congratulating the chairman of that committee, the hon. member for Willowdale, for his excellent stewardship and the great learning experience that he allowed all of us to have. I think he treated the proceedings most fairly and really was a master at dealing with the many witnesses we saw.