

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, two months before the last election the West German firm Thyssen AG announced plans to build a \$58 million manufacturing plant at Bear Head in Cape Breton.

This plant was to produce armoured personnel carriers and environmental equipment. Some 500 people would be directly employed and another 800 indirectly employed at this facility. What the company needed and was encouraged by the federal government would be forthcoming was an opportunity to bid on a contract to build armoured personnel vehicles for our Armed Forces. They are still waiting for this opportunity.

Meanwhile, skilled workers from my riding where the unemployment rate in 1989 was 17.7 per cent are forced to leave Atlantic Canada because there are no jobs for them; 17,346 Atlantic Canadians lost their job or suffered a work reduction since the November 1988 election. Defence cuts in Atlantic Canada alone mean that as many as 1,700 jobs could be lost.

Yet, while promising to slash defence spending in order to reduce the federal deficit, this government awarded last summer a \$110 million contract sole source to General Motors in London, Ontario to build light armoured vehicles. The unemployment rate there was 4.4 per cent.

Where is the economic justice? When is the Prime Minister going to wake up to the fact that there is an economic crisis in Atlantic Canada and it is one of his government's own making? If his government is going to—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member's time has expired.

* * *

PROPOSED GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Ken James (Sarnia—Lambton): Mr. Speaker, throughout the Christmas recess I talked to a number of my constituents in Sarnia—Lambton about the proposed goods and services tax.

Oral Questions

For example, on January 9, I met with an attentive and inquisitive group of municipal contractors and suppliers. When the meeting began, the mood was one of simple opposition and a little apprehension.

Yet, as we talked and I answered a number of general and technical questions, the mood changed drastically. These representatives of both small and medium sized business developed a better understanding and appreciation for the GST system. Most now knew what would be taxed and what would not, what input tax credits could mean to their business in a positive way, what their filing requirements might be, and how the GST package minimizes their administration and compliance costs.

This is the type of discussion which should be occurring all across the country. The replacement of a tax system is not simple or straightforward.

Therefore it is essential that all members of the House, including those opposite, present their constituents with as much unbiased and pertinent information on the GST as possible. It is only from this type of knowledge base that Canadians can form a rational and informed opinion.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

On December 18 last in this House, the Prime Minister said that his government—and I am using his words—“would be assisting the Atlantic fishery and the communities affected as vigorously as we intervened on behalf of the prairie farmers”. Those were his words at that time, just before Christmas.

No such program has been announced. All there has been is a certain recycling of money that would have been spent in any event had there been no crisis at all and no lay-offs.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister led everyone in this House and in the country to believe that there would not be any such program when he said that “there is no crisis in Atlantic Canada”.