

*Government Orders*

Canadians feel about it, I suspect that I would be trying to pull some kind of smoke screen. Well, that is probably not true, but I can understand why government members would do that.

The government is saying that if there are net surpluses as a result of the GST at the end, which of course there will be, this will be automatically applied to deficit reduction and debt reduction. A surplus would be when all the money from the GST is collected and all the rebates are paid out and all the costs and so on are paid back.

If governments want to do that, are certainly capable and able to do that without special legislation, but let us pause for a moment to look at the role of government. The point of government is to collect revenues from a variety of sources through taxes, excise taxes and so on, and then invest them in ways to enhance the country and the lives of its citizens. We call things like that unemployment insurance. Traditionally, we call it unemployment insurance. We also call these things pensions, hospitals, medicare, education, highways and so on.

In other words the reason why we have millions of people wanting to become Canadian citizens is because of the kind of society and the kinds of agencies and organizations that have been created over the years. I cannot think of a single progressive economic or social policy that did not originate with either the CCF or the NDP. They have been introduced by other governments, to be fair, such as Liberal governments and Conservative governments. The ideas, however, came from the New Democrats and the CCF and it is what makes Canada a special place today.

We have seen the erosion of that over the last number of years. The point being debated by this motion was put by my hon. friend the member for Essex—Windsor. Unfortunately, because he was busy elsewhere on Friday, the amendment came in my name and was introduced. I must give him credit for having thought through this in significant detail to enable us to have this debate today.

• (1250)

What we are simply saying is this. If there are net revenues after the GST, should 100 per cent of these revenues be used to pay down the deficit or the debt?

We are simply saying that we should keep some options open. I could make a very strong case today, as others have, that some of that money could be used for retraining programs for those individuals in the country who, through no fault of their own, have lost their jobs because of the free trade agreement, because of the GST

and other federal government policies. They have lost their employment and their source of income for their families and they ought to be retrained. We ought to be doing an awful lot more in this area.

Why not use some of this money to facilitate people taking courses and retraining programs? I do not hear any reasons why not. I say that might be a particular use of some of those GST funds.

We might consider the fact that there are 1.5 million people out of work today who could be using financing and funding for retraining and upgrading their particular skills. Also, what about giving some support to various enterprises and co-operatives, and so on, to create new enterprises and new employment. There is all sorts of material that we have elaborated on before: reforestation program, silviculture programs, bank stabilization programs to list only a handful. These are meaningful areas into which people could be put to work.

Perhaps the most obvious one that has been put forward by the Canadian Association of Municipalities and by the premiers now of most provinces is that we have deteriorating roads, bridges, water and sewage systems that need to be repaired or upgraded or created. My friend from Manitoba just returned from a major tour throughout northern Manitoba visiting Indian reserves. The appalling situation is that that virtually all of the native people living in that part of Canada have no water system or sewage treatment system. That is absolutely disgraceful in a country as rich and wealthy as Canada.

We are saying why not use some of that GST money to assist the provinces and the municipalities of Canada to develop that municipal infrastructure that has to be done. This is not a sort of make work project when you have to rebuild a bridge or a road or a water system. It is something that has to be done. Can you think of a better time to do it than right now?

It would put people to work, encourage manufacturing, and send a very clear signal that this government is concerned and prepared to take action on a fairly major scale.

**Mr. McDermid:** We are doing that.