

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Speaker, we urge once again that the Government of Canada see its way clear to axe the tax and to prevent the GST from being presented on books and literature in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, it is my duty to table in the House today a petition pursuant to Standing Order 36, to the effect that proposing a tax on books, newspapers and magazines is a measure that is absolutely regressive. Your petitioners, in fact there are several dozen here, maintain that the free circulation of printed matter is the cornerstone of our democracy, our culture and our education. They claim that an educated and productive society would be adversely affected by a measure that would impose a tax on books.

Your petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to confirm the principles which, for many years, have formed the basis for exempting printed matter and to provide for such exemption in the GST bill to be implemented on January 1, 1991. Otherwise, this government will go down in history as the government that put a tax on books, reading and knowledge.

[*English*]

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present these petitions on behalf of western Canadians. It is inconceivable to these Canadians that with the high rate of illiteracy and all of the efforts and resources going to that, the government would put a further tax on books, especially in my area in the north where reading is one of the delights of western Canadians. A tax such as this will not be tolerated by them.

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing): Mr. Speaker, I rise today pursuant to Standing Order 36, to present a petition signed by people from all over Ontario, as it applies to the goods and services tax on books and literature. These people call upon Parliament to reaffirm the historic principles embodied in tax free status for the printed word by retaining the zero rate in the GST legislation and the regulations.

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, I too take pleasure in presenting to the House a petition from people in St. John's, Mount Pearl, Manuels, Topsail, Portugal Cove and yes, Mr. Speaker, from Paradise itself. These people in Paradise and elsewhere are outraged by what is an outrage. They have given me a petition to present to this House, knowing that the Government of Canada has never, since Confederation, done what this government is about to do. That Confederation was the one in 1867. The real one, of course, was in 1949 when two countries came together, but they are talking about the first one.

They are saying that never in all that time have we taxed the Bible. Never have we taxed learning. Now, this crowd, in addition to running us into the ground want to make us Godless and illiterate, as well.

I support the petition completely and ask that the government mend its ways and stop taxing the Bible and books. Do not be such cowards.

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present two petitions today. First, I have a petition here signed by 553 residents of Edmonton and surrounding areas. All of these people are unanimous, as are countless tens of thousands before them, in calling on the government to reject the proposal for a goods and services tax and cause the government to cease with the proposal which will shift the burden of tax on to ordinary Canadians through a regressive consumption tax, instead of real tax reform.

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CABLE BROADCAST INDUSTRY

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): While I am on my feet and apropos some business that will be before the House today, I would like to present a petition signed by a number of Canadians. They point out that cable companies made an average of 32 per cent profit on fixed assets in 1988 or more than twice the level of the regulated telephone companies. They point out as well that cable prices increased by 6 per cent annually between 1984 and 1988 and by 29 per cent over 18 months during 1988-89 at a time when telephone prices actually dropped.

For these reasons the petitioners are calling upon Parliament to adopt Bill C-284 and apply a rate-of-return regulation to the cable industry.