

Government Orders

interest costs on the national debt, and it can use those to pay for those election goodies which my friend from the Liberal Party is so concerned about.

I must say I am most surprised—and I have been thinking about it ever since I started my speech—not by the government's attempt to bring in this shell game piece of legislation before us, because that is par for the course as far as they are concerned, I am most surprised by the fact that the Liberal Party, which has claimed to oppose the GST, should say that yes, it is now willing to support the sugar-coating for the GST, the shell game which the government is carrying forward. I just hope, Mr. Speaker, there will be some effort on the part of some of the saner members of the Liberal caucus to get them to change their position.

Certainly as far as my constituency is concerned, which is what my colleague was also raising, we have had firms protesting this summer. We have a trucking protest which is taking place at the present moment. We have had manufacturing protests by manufacturing owners and by workers, all concerned with the incredibly heavy burden which the GST is placing on them. We have to get rid of that tax; that is what we should be talking about in this debate.

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Essex—Windsor what particular training he has that allows him to so ably and capably give a speech with a straight face claiming that the NDP is interested in the national debt when, since the Parliament started, in virtually every example I can think of, it has asked us to spend more money.

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, let me give a short history lesson to my Conservative colleague. When this new government first came into office, one of the things we suggested to them was that the Cape Breton heavy water plant should be shut. That was not anybody else's suggestion; it was not their suggestion, not coming from the hon. member. It was our suggestion. This was a white elephant that was costing this country incredible sums of money.

We have also suggested at various stages in recent years, but especially since the changes in eastern Europe took place, that there has to be a very significant cut in the defence budget of this country. In fact, my colleague, the member from Victoria has put some very strong points with respect to the need to do that.

An hon. member: He is the chairman of the standing committee.

Mr. Langdon: He made some very strong points with respect to the need to do that in response to the government's recent defence statement. This was a defence paper that has come out suggesting that we will cut the military, we will cut bases, but by gosh we will still spend more. Talk about Conservative financial policy. That seems to be the best example. We will get 8,000 fewer soldiers, two less bases and we will still spend more money.

If I might, Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the member that when we first came into this House after the 1984 election, we told this government that its attempts to manage the economy by cutting taxes and so forth for high income people, by giving benefits to the large—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The time for questions or comments has expired.

[*Translation*]

The time provided for questions and comments has now expired. Resuming debate. The parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak at the second reading stage of Bill C-21. I did not intend to talk about the GST. I wanted to congratulate my Liberal colleague who supports the bill on second reading, and I hope he will do the same on third reading. However, after listening to comments by the member for the New Democratic Party, I feel I must get back to the GST, as the hon. member did, and set the record straight.

Mr. Speaker, the member for the New Democratic Party referred to the GST as an unfair tax. He overlooked the fact that the federal sales tax was most unfair. Mr. Speaker, when I was doing a master's in tax law in 1978-79 at the University of Sherbrooke, our professor told us in a course on federal sales tax that it had outlived its usefulness. It had to be changed, and he was anxious to see a political party that would have the guts to abolish a tax that hurt Canadian producers who wanted to export goods and gave importers an unfair advantage. Mr. Speaker, this was more than ten years ago. The tax remained unchanged. It was the wrong kind of tax. We were the only country in the world that still had a manufacturer's sales tax, a tax that was grossly