

Oral Questions

in the way they are by January 1991 is because they think Canadians might be stupid enough to forget about it in time for the next election.

• (1430)

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will know that not only the Auditor General, but the precedent-setting examples in this House, as well as an all-party resolution of the finance committee of this House of Commons, quite categorically concluded in a signed statement that any matters relating to the GST should "publicize the details of the new tax".

What we are doing is following normal procedures. We are making certain that Canadians are prepared in advance of the change from the regressive federal sales tax to the fairer GST. We are progressing along those lines for the benefit of Canadians, particularly the small business sector that has to prepare now for the transition from a bad tax to a much better tax.

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is to the same minister.

An inappropriate GST ad campaign cost Canadians \$800,000 in 1989. Today, just 24 hours after the third reading of the GST bill, a new multi-million dollar propaganda blitz has commenced. This blitz circumvents the parliamentary process by prejudging the scope and implementation of the GST.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Pickard: Will the minister tell this House and Canadians that the government truly respects the parliamentary process by withdrawing this brainwash campaign and allowing the Senate to fulfil its parliamentary obligations?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I notice that the member read the story in *The Ottawa Citizen* today written by Deborah Dowling. I told Miss Dowling this morning that there is really nothing new in the story that she printed because in the finance committee of March 13 I pointed out to the all-party committee that in mid-April a pre-registration kit containing an information booklet and a volunteer pre-registration form will be mailed to some 2 million potential registrants explaining how to pre-register for the GST

and what assistance can be provided in preparation for the new tax.

I went on to say: "The sooner one registers the sooner one can prepare for the transition".

That is what we are doing and that is what I told the committee on March 13. We are doing it so that businesses can prepare in advance, as has been a tradition of the parliamentary system in this country and in other parliamentary systems, and as the Auditor General has pointed out time and time again. We must advise Canadians, particularly the business community, in a responsible way how best to adjust to this better tax.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Yesterday in Toronto we were told the Prime Minister and the President of the United States discussed talks about talks on an acid rain proposal. On the same day the International Joint Commission issued its report on the future of the Great Lakes, a report that was extremely critical of the lack of action by successive Canadian governments. We know that Canadians want action on the environment, not just more talk.

Will the Prime Minister accept the recommendations of the International Joint Commission to stop the flow of all toxic substances into the Great Lakes, and act now on that recommendation?

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, we agree with the concern expressed in the report addressed to both countries. As a matter of fact both countries are moving ahead together to address the issues raised in the report. For example, we have just announced in Canada a \$125 million additional plan for the Great Lakes, providing for 42 remedial action plans, 17 of them in Canada.

We have also set up the basis of what will be *The Green Plan* in terms of regulating all industries discharging toxics into the Great Lakes. We have also set up a priority list of substances under CEPA, according to which we will assess, in priority, the toxicity of the main toxic substances discharged in the Great Lakes. We are doing what we can, which is a lot, but never enough, and