

Oral Questions

on unstable, expensive sources of foreign oil, which reliance is a significant contributor to inflation in the country.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I am getting a number of homilies from the Prime Minister, but no answers to my questions. May I ask him one final question? In view of the fact that the substantial increases in the budget are intended to finance the tax credit program for home owners—and that is obvious—will the Prime Minister justify, or explain to the country why all the taxpayers in Canada should be called upon to finance a program which is intended to serve and help only a special group in the community?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, the official opposition has carried its opposition to this program, which will benefit thousands of Canadian home owners, into obstructive measures in the House of Commons. They are now carrying that opposition into the question period. If the member has questions he wants to direct in relation to the budget, and to use the question period for the purpose for which it was intended, I invite those questions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1420)

EFFECT ON INTEREST RATES

Mr. Ed Lumley (Stormont-Dundas): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister. For over a year now the Prime Minister has promised lower interest rates. Can he tell the House what measures there are in the budget that will have the general effect of lowering interest rates throughout Canada, outside the small business development bonds?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, while the whole thrust of the budget—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. While heckling has been part of our practice, I cannot understand how it is possible to start to heckle a person before they have begun to give a response.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, the whole thrust of the budget is to create an environment in which interest rates can go down. That will be done by reducing the size of the government deficit and by reducing the government's financial requirements for next year by \$1.75 billion, which will give more room to the private sector and ease the pressure on interest rates. I hope that the forecasts in our budget are more accurate than those made last year, when an inflation rate of 6.5 per cent was prophesied and it is now 9.2 per cent.

Mr. Lumley: Mr. Speaker, I regret that the Prime Minister, who made the promise during the election campaign, could not

[Mr. Clark.]

answer my question and had to defer it to the Minister of Finance. I will put my supplementary question to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has talked about helping special groups in our society. Outside of the minimum relief provided by the energy tax credit, what does the Prime Minister plan to do for the senior citizens of this country, particularly those living on fixed incomes?

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, the senior citizens of this country will be assisted by the energy tax credit, which will apply particularly to those who have an income of up to \$21,380. They have been assisted by our spouses' allowance legislation, which was introduced in this House this fall to account for a Liberal gap. Senior citizens will also be assisted by the new veterans' allowance legislation that has been introduced, and further assisted by the fact that we will bring our economy back to a healthy state, which will have the effect of increasing the amount that they will get from the government generally.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ALLEGED REVERSAL OF ELECTION CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, blarney is blarney whether or not it comes from Newfoundland. I would like to ask the Prime Minister a serious question.

During the recent election campaign, the Prime Minister promised to stimulate the economy, provide low interest rates and bring forward major tax cuts for the people of Canada. Considering that in last night's budget the government reversed itself completely on virtually every one of these promises by bringing forward a restrictive budget, by maintaining high interest rates, and by increasing taxes by some \$3.5 billion for the people of Canada, would the Prime Minister explain to the House and to the people of Canada why, in a parliamentary democracy, after reversing himself so completely, he ought not go to the Governor General to seek dissolution in order to get a mandate from the people of Canada for this complete reversal of policies?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, one can always tell when the Leader of the New Democratic Party intends to raise a question that he does not regard as serious, because he prefaces it by calling it a serious question. The Leader of the New Democratic Party should know that if he wishes to force an election upon the country, he will have to take it on his own shoulders and not seek shortcuts in the way he has suggested and as he has done in a number of other ways.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister will see from the amendments we intend to move today—when we will have all 27 members present—that we intend to be consistent, at least, with what we promised the people of Canada.