

NUCLEAR DEVICES

REQUEST THAT SOUTH AFRICA DISCONTINUE TESTING— MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 43, I rise on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity.

In view of the fact that United States intelligence services have reported that the government of South Africa has exploded a nuclear device in the atmosphere, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie):

That this House demand that the government of South Africa discontinue all nuclear testing.

Mr. Speaker: Introduction of such a motion for debate at this time can be done only with the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

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PENSIONS

EQUALITY OF BENEFITS FOR WIDOWS—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Hal Herbert (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, I rise, under provisions of Standing Order 43, on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Parkdale-High Park (Mr. Flis):

That the government recognize the desirability that all Canadians in similar financial circumstances be treated equally, and that to this end all widows with little or no income and who are between the ages of 60 and 65 receive the same access to federal pension benefits as are presently accorded or are to be granted only to those widows whose husbands have died at a certain age.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with the terms of Standing Order 43, such a motion can be introduced at this time only with the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

INCREASES IN INTEREST RATES—ADVERSE EFFECT ON SMALL BUSINESS—REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the President of the Treasury Board, who always told us about his concern for the private sector and for privatization.

Oral Questions

Will he really do something to help the private sector, especially small business, to cope with the serious problem and the concern that the government's policy of high interest rates has created for Canadian business?

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member for Windsor West that we constantly have under review various measures that would help the small business sector in this country. I am very, very pleased that at last the hon. member is becoming alerted to the sad consequences of the deficits his former government ran up in this country.

• (1115)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, last December 13 the President of the Treasury Board, speaking in this House on behalf of the Conservative party, said, "For every one-half point the interest rates go up, it costs businesses \$375 million."

Does he realize this means the Conservative high interest rate policy has already cost Canadian business over \$2 billion? Why is he abandoning the promises he made before the election to bring down interest rates? Why is he not doing anything to help Canadian business, especially small business, instead of giving us this empty talk?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, again, as the hon. member knows as a former ex-cabinet minister, it is not primarily the responsibility of the Treasury Board to take such measures as he is referring to.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stevens: But I can assure him that this government is the friend of small business in this country—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stevens:—and if ways and means can be taken to assist the small businessman, they will certainly be taken.

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, if the Conservative government is such a friend to small business, why, according to press reports, is John Bulloch, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, expressing fear that a downturn of consumer spending due to the Conservative high interest rate policy will leave small retailers with large inventories of unsold goods, and thereby increase the number of business bankruptcies?

Why has the government taken no steps to help them deal with this problem and just given us this talk? What estimates does he, or his colleague the Minister of Finance, have of the number of business bankruptcies anticipated because of the Conservative high interest rate policy?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, again I would reply to the hon. member who raised similar questions at the finance committee meeting yesterday, I understand, that when that information is