

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased with the amount of time and the amount of practical experience that the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Industry is bringing to the development of effective small business policies in the country.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** We are acting on that commitment, as on others, and measures relating specifically to the encouragement of small business will be introduced later this session.

**Mr. Phillips:** A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to refer the Prime Minister—

**An hon. Member:** Another speech.

**Mr. Phillips:**—to the then opposition's small business critic last November when he was in opposition, who demanded that the minister of state for small business protect small businessmen from what he called "exuberant bank rates". They have now gone from "exuberant" to "exorbitant". Can the Prime Minister tell us specifically what measures, if any, will be brought in to protect the small businessman against the effects of rapidly rising interest rates?

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot give the hon. member that information now. As he becomes more acquainted with this House, he will know that some of those measures will be brought forward in the course of the budget.

SMALL BUSINESS—AMENDMENTS TO LEGISLATION TO REDUCE  
BANKRUPTCIES

**Mr. Maurice Harquail (Restigouche):** In light of the fact that the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Industry is not in the House today, in view of the fact that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce is not in this House, and in view of the fact that I am not convinced that his seatmate, the Minister of State for International Trade, who I am told is supposed to be responsible for industry, trade and commerce—

**Some hon. Members:** Question.

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** What poor taste.

**Mr. Harquail:** Therefore, I put my question to the Prime Minister. I wonder if the Prime Minister could tell the House, with respect to his former critic's position, his government's position with respect to the question of the reduction of the bankruptcy rate in Canada affecting small businesses. Could he also tell the House when he intends to introduce amendments to the Small Businesses Loans Act to alleviate this serious situation?

**An hon. Member:** It is not a serious situation.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, we remain concerned about the incidence of bankruptcy amongst small businesses in the country. We are, naturally, directing our economic policies now toward the establishment of a set of

[Mr. Phillips.]

economic circumstances in Canada which will allow Canadian large business—and, particularly, small—to flourish in this country.

● (1420)

**Mr. Harquail:** Mr. Speaker, my question is, again, to the Prime Minister. On many occasions, the former opposition small business critic said that a PC government would expand the small business loans program to include working capital as well as investment capital. Can the Prime Minister tell the House, today, what the government's policy is now, what it is going to be, and when we can expect his government to introduce the policy to this House?

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot give a precise date. I presume the hon. member is asking a serious question. But we are looking seriously at a range of measures which the government can introduce to help Canadian small business.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF OLD AGE PENSIONERS AND  
PERSONS ON FIXED INCOME

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the report today by Statistics Canada that manufacturing profits for the third quarter of this year are up 54.1 per cent over the same period last year, in view of the fact that pensioners and others on low and fixed incomes are having a continuing struggle with the cost of living, and in view of the clear message yesterday to this Parliament and to this government that the Canadian people want something done about the high cost of living, will the Prime Minister not reconsider the answer he gave to me last Friday when he said that his government was not prepared to do specific things, such as bringing in a bread subsidy or a milk subsidy, to bring immediate relief to Canadians who are having such a desperate struggle with the rising cost of living?

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, let me take the opportunity to congratulate the House leader of the New Democratic Party on the victory of his party yesterday in the byelection in Prince Albert.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** Let me say to him that we are not planning to reconsider the position that I stated in the House in relation to the specific measures regarding which he questioned me the other day.

**Mr. Knowles:** Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact, and especially in light of the repeated references to increasing costs in fresh fruits and vegetables, that profits were up also in manufactured and processed goods, so that right across the board pensioners and others are having such a difficult time, will the Prime Minister not consider the fact that it is not good enough