

*Oral Questions***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance about the record number of bankruptcies.

In the previous worst year, 1982, when the minister was in opposition, he said: "This government must begin to realize that it is individual people who are being hurt." He went on to say: "We must deal with individual Canadians who are losing their jobs and their businesses."

Will the minister back up his caring words from then with action now to respond to this record 37 per cent increase in bankruptcies in the country?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I understand that it is people who are losing those businesses. I understand that the people who are working at those firms are losing their jobs, and I do not take any pleasure in that. I do not enjoy that at all.

What I have to point out to the hon. member, as he makes reference to 1981-1982, is that the level of bankruptcies as a percentage of the economy is about half what it was at that time.

The other point that I would make to him is that, if we are going to be able to get through this period and avoid the excessives of the high interest rates of 22 per cent and 25 per cent that we endured in 1981-1982, it is important for us to get the inflationary pressures under of control. That is why we have been following the policies that we have been following. We are making some progress there. We are getting those inflationary pressures under control. As we do so, we will be able to see some reduction in interest rates.

If we let the party go on, as was the case in 1981-1982, then the hon. member is asking for exactly the sort of thing we want to avoid here. Mr. Speaker, we are determined to avoid that.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the minister has lost those caring attitudes that he expressed in 1982.

Paul Cazabon is a farmer in St. Joachim in my constituency who has lost his 740 acre farm because of high interest rates on his machinery, his land, and his operating loans. That is what these bankruptcy statistics mean. They mean broken dreams for people right across the country.

I want to ask the Prime Minister directly: What has the Prime Minister of the country to say to Paul Cazabon and his family?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, Paul Cazabon is someone for whom I have a great deal of sympathy and the difficulties that he is going through. But if we do not do the things we are doing, there will be many more Paul Cazabons who will be suffering from the same sort of interest rates that we had in 1981-1982. Surely, my hon. friend must recognize that that is something that we want to avoid. We must avoid. That is why we are following the directions we are now.

As I have indicated on many occasions, we are making progress. If we continue to make progress, we are going to see many fewer people such as Paul Cazabon suffering from the things he is going through now. Those difficulties are very, very difficult for him. I understand that, but we want to stop this happening in the future. The best thing we can do to stop that happening in the future is get the problems under control, as we seem to be getting those problems under control.

• (1430)

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): I cannot believe that this minister is telling us the best that he can do is to see an increase of 7,000 in bankruptcy statistics this year. Why can this minister and this Prime Minister not give us some sensitive, caring answers? Instead of action to help Paul Cazabon, the minister is spending another \$300,000 on a video.

I ask this minister—

[*Translation*]

What explanation does the minister have for wasting this kind of money when so many Canadians have gone bankrupt this year?

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): As I indicated in my previous answer, Mr. Speaker, I do not take any pleasure in seeing what Paul Cazabon is going through now, but I do know that in the province of Ontario there are a lot fewer Paul Cazabons than there were as recently as 1986. The 1986 statistics show 71 farm