

*Supply*

I think it is fair to say that this Government has been hit, unfortunately, with the worst recession since the great Depression. Notwithstanding that, we have shown leadership, stability and sensitivity. If that means a long session because of this obstruction, then that is what it means; but that is what strong leadership is all about.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is the Hon. Member rising to ask a question?

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary read very diligently from a prepared statement. I know he was somewhat forced into reading it, but I am sure he has some opinions of his own. He made a fairly great issue over the fact that the Government had provided assistance to farmers, small-businessmen and so on. How can he commend the action of the Government in the face of a very dramatic rash of bankruptcies in the farm community and business community as well as the personal bankruptcies that have occurred in this country? The Hon. Member was in the House this morning when I spoke and I read the statistics.

What are we to tell these people who have faced the severity of bankruptcy? Over 400 farmers declared bankruptcy in 1982. There is a suggestion to the effect that for every one who declares bankruptcy, there are probably ten others who go out of business voluntarily. Since the Parliamentary Secretary so vigorously defended the policies of his Government, can he give us some idea what we on this side should tell those who have faced such a disastrous calamity?

• (1510)

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I am always glad to hear from the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski). I, like many on this side of the House, regret that he is not a candidate for the leadership of his Party. I know he would be a strong candidate and one whose candidacy we would all welcome.

I come from Toronto. I am not an expert on farming, but I do note by looking at—

**Miss MacDonald:** You are not an expert on much.

**Mr. Smith:** Well, my father came from the Ottawa Valley and his family were farmers. I do note that in 1982 there was over \$208 million loaned out under the Farm Improvement Loans Act.

There is no easy answer to the question of bankruptcy. The answer obviously is that when you believe in a free market society, and we in this House do, the simple fact is that business goes in cycles. The entire Western world has been hit with a recession. Regrettably, bankruptcies accompany every recession. I suppose those Members on the other side of the House who do not particularly have the commitment to the private sector that we on this side of the House have would feel that Government should intervene more in society and bail everybody out all the time. We do not happen to believe in that kind of intervention. We have tried to provide programs that are available to some people who will, by virtue of them, perhaps be able to keep their heads above water during tough

times. That is a fact of life you are faced with when you have a free market society, and it is regrettable. But we have tried to create programs that will in fact provide some reasonable amount of relief, though it is not possible to bail everybody out all the time.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Mr. Speaker, since the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council is such a proponent of the free market economy, and I to take it that he is in opposition to the Canagrex Bill which his colleague the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) is proposing, which is really a massive intervention in the free market economy? Is the Parliamentary Secretary in opposition to that particular proposal?

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I have always felt that Liberals are people who believe in social justice within a free enterprise fabric. What we try to do is strike a balance. I think that a program such as Canagrex, which is a combination of having Government help sell abroad the products that the private sector in Canada's agricultural community can produce, is an ideal combination that puts big Government to work on behalf of little guys who have initiative, who believe in the work ethic, and who want to have their products sold abroad, but because they are not big enough they are not really able to do so. I think that type of program is quite consistent with belief in the free enterprise system.

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

**Mr. McGrath:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Parliamentary Secretary if he can define for us what in his estimation is a session and what in his estimation is a sitting, since this debate is all about the length of the session and the failure of the Government to bring in a new Speech from the Throne. There is a bit of confusion in my mind about that. As Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council, how would he define a session or a sitting?

**Mr. Smith:** Well, I think historically a sitting basically means a day. As I understand it, the reason for "sitting" becoming "session" from John Macdonald's motion in the Colonial Assembly in 1865 to the Act of Parliament in 1867 was that the Act was drafted by a professional draftsman who used the same words as used in the Bill of Rights in 1688 and 1699. I know my Hon. friend is quite familiar with that Act. I think if he traces the history of those two words, he will find that in fact there is a bit of inconsistency there.

A sitting as we now use it means a single day. A session more often than not has been equated to mean on a yearly basis. But I do not believe there is any hide-bound convention that suggests that it has to be that way.

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, following up on my colleague for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), I put it to my colleague across the aisle that surely he is not prepared to dismiss lightly, as indeed the Government Leader in the Senate was not prepared to dismiss lightly, the very strong objection that Senate McIlraith, a former Liberal Cabinet Minister, raised to