

inevitable increase in premiums if we are going to maintain the viability of the Canada Pension Plan.

Mr. Frith: Mr. Speaker, there have been more conversions on the road to Meech Lake than there ever were on the road to Damascus.

REQUEST FOR DISABILITY BENEFIT INCREASE

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): My supplementary question is for the Minister of Finance. If there are going to be significant increases in the contribution rate to the Canada Pension Plan this will result in a significant surplus being created. Will the Minister not advocate the use of surpluses to enhance the disability payments to the disabled? Will he not look at the possibility of allowing Canadians a chance of early retirement, thereby creating job opportunities for our young people who presently have the highest unemployment rate?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member does not tell the House that if no changes are made to the Canada Pension Plan it will be broke in a number of years, so changes must be made. That is the essence of the review that the provincial Finance Ministers and myself made a week ago in Montreal. We will be looking at the impact of changes, not only on the size of the fund, and therefore the monies that would be redirected to the provinces, but also on the impact on small business which is concerned that any significant increase over and above what is needed in the Canada Pension Plan will make it more difficult for it to create jobs. We do not want to have that impact on small business.

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FINANCE

CORPORATE TAX STRUCTURE—REQUEST FOR REFORM

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. I have just returned from British Columbia and I want to tell the Minister that food banks—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Mitchell: I want to tell the Minister and the Government that food banks have doubled, and people are being turned away hungry. The unemployment rate has increased, with 25,000 jobs having been lost over the past three months. Crime rates are up, and children are being permanently damaged by poverty. This is just in British Columbia.

People simply cannot take such additional harsh restraint measures as I understand he is proposing in his coming Budget. Why will he not introduce the kind of corporate and personal tax reforms that our Leader and Party have been advocating? Why will he not let people know that for once he is going to benefit ordinary people rather than the corporate sector?

Oral Questions

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to welcome the Hon. Member back to Ottawa.

Mr. Waddell: Don't be so smug. Don't be so patronizing.

Ms. Mitchell: It's about time you went out there yourself.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Let me respond to the question.

Mr. Blaikie: It is not a joking matter, Mike.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I responded to the question put by the Member for Kamloops-Shuswap to the effect that there would not be major tax reform in this Budget. It is too early for that. There are too many complexities.

Mr. Broadbent: It is too late.

• (1440)

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I will say to the Leader of the NDP that if he wants to have a disruptive tax policy that will upset job creation by small business, the way to go about doing it is to throw a fast tax reform on them too soon, without proper thought.

The direction of the economic statement in November was to reduce interest rates. A reduction in interest rates will have the most far reaching effect of creating jobs and addressing the problems that the hon. lady referred to a moment ago.

REQUEST FOR TAX CHANGES

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, let me go back to a comment made earlier by the Minister of National Health and Welfare about his concerns about how best to protect social programs for those who need it most. Will the Minister of Finance follow our leader's suggestion and reform the child tax exemptions, impose a minimum tax, and raise the marginal tax rates so that there will be a savings which can then be put into increased family benefits for families that need it desperately?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I believe that all of the matters which the Hon. Member has put forward today are matters which are best dealt with in a Budget. I appreciate the comments that she has made. I disagree with some, but we will have to wait until a Budget to see how those are dealt with.

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EMPLOYMENT

JOBLESS YOUTH—GOVERNMENT PLANS

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immi-