

We all deplore the existence of food banks. However, I think we must be realistic, and I imagine everyone will agree that it takes time to turn the situation around. In fact, it has existed for some time, and I think there were food banks when the hon. member's party was in power.

However, as I said before in English all Canadians should be glad to see the results of the work done by the Prime Minister of Canada at last year's summit in New York. This afternoon he will make good on his commitment to sign the convention on children's rights, and I hope that all members of this House will appreciate that fact.

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[English]

### POVERTY

**Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the same minister.

The current struggle to have the basic necessities of food and shelter is reaping its devastating effect on Canadians in the north.

Northerners for the first time are now forced to establish dependencies on food banks, and there are school children who share their lunch with those who are coming to school hungry.

What is the minister prepared to do with the conditions of poverty in this country so grim that people are walking homeless and hungry at minus 47?

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that question is the same as the one I answered before.

Once again, I said that we are very sensitive to the problem of poverty, particularly for children and people who the hon. member represents. I know very well that where we have one poor child in the country, in native communities we have two.

I know and I recognize that very well. In the strategy that I will put forward, I want to put particular emphasis on the aboriginal people and the problem of poverty for children.

### Oral Questions

#### SOCIAL CHARTER

**Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Yesterday the European Community adopted a social charter. The Prime Minister often cites the European Community as an example for the direction in which the world is going.

Will he now acknowledge that the time has come for Canada to adopt a social charter to define the principles and the values we share and to protect the institutions and programs that reflect those principles and values?

• (1440)

Will he undertake today to raise the issue of a social charter with the premiers in future constitutional discussions?

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (President of the Privy Council and Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, the issue has been raised in very general terms by the premier of the province of Ontario. I can arrange for the hon. member to speak to the premier of Ontario if that would be helpful.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):** Well, I will not do that if it is not desired.

What I think is needed now is some detail from those provinces and others that are interested in a social charter. I think it would be helpful to have that come before the special joint committee so there will be a specific proposal that can be looked at by the special joint committee and upon which recommendations can be made to this House and to the country.

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#### RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

**Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. In signing the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child today, the Prime Minister will accept the principle that "the essential needs of children should be given high priority in the allocation of resources in bad times as well as in good times".