

that there are things money cannot buy, that Canada is still a democratic state, that it is still up to the citizen to decide, that no decision can be imposed upon him and, more often than not, that his decision cannot be bought.

Mr. Speaker, I wish that this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Mr. Serge Joyal (Maisonneuve-Rosemont): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate on Bill C-213, because it raises a quite important issue. It goes much beyond the public opinion polls made during the election campaign. Indeed, it deals with the entire question of information during the election campaign.

As a matter of fact, since the appearance of the communication media through broadcasting, our election techniques have been entirely altered. This view, Mr. Speaker, applies as much to hon. members opposite as to members on this side.

As a result of the advent of television and radio and the increasingly broader role played by the media in the information of citizens, the broadcasting of views and information is quite important in the choice made by the electors on voting day.

In the past, the only opportunities for the elector to get acquainted with the government measures and decisions were the public meetings.

You remember, Mr. Speaker, that it was the custom after Sunday services or still at grandiose ceremonies to summon the local people and convey to them comments and judgments that were mutually exchanged on what was done during past terms.

Today, the elector is shut up in his home. Quite often, he does not have the time to get interested in electoral debates. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I think we are mistaken about the interest most citizens take in the electoral campaign.

All hon. members will agree that the period of keenest interest exists in the last few days of the electoral campaign, in the last two weeks in particular, and that everything before that serves as nothing more than a warm-up for the electoral machinery. Therefore, that is the time when interest is developing and it is also when the modern information techniques are applied.

Surveys as we now know them changed in a quite unpredictable way. Indeed, over the years, we had grown accustomed to giving first place to the written media. Anyone going through dailies and weeklies of that period can find out that every party bought space in them, and more generally emphasized communications in the written media. But radio and television caught up, and now the broadcast word is just as likely to influence voters as the written word.

I was rather surprised to read Bill C-213 in its present form and hear my hon. friend suggest among other things that he would not oppose the regulation of surveys. Personally I would not oppose it either if all the facts were known. But I had a quick look through papers published on the question, I looked at studies completed here in United States and England, and I realized very soon we have but limited knowledge in the field. As a matter of fact, nobody doubts surveys have an impact, but the ques-

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tion of measuring such an impact, of estimating its effect on the voter is still unanswered. I would direct my colleagues to an article which appeared in pages 25 and 26 of October 1974 issue of the *Economist*, that is a few months after the July election.

Reference to a couple of studies done by university professors can be found here. The first one is by Professor Harris. It is considered the most authoritative, first because it involves a representative sample of voters and second because questions asked dealt directly with the impact of the survey on the voter's choice. And here, is Professor Harris' conclusion. Professor Harris found no evidence that polls affected total turn-out of voters or switches between one party or another.

Mr. Speaker, citizens are undoubtedly interested in knowing results of surveys. However, the credibility of surveys may be the determining factor. As a matter of fact, during the last election campaign, for instance, the Liberal and Conservative parties both published the results of an opinion survey. Obviously, each of them believed to be ahead of the other and both believed they had made important gains. I do not think that such a survey was a determining factor on the voter's choice as, finally, these conclusions were contradictory.

Another survey was made by a radio station in Montreal, based on a very limited sample of voters and three weeks before the vote. Even there, I do not think this survey had a determining influence on the voter's choice. On the other hand, it has also been said that the sponsors of these surveys could control public opinion. However, a survey was made 15 days before the elections outcome in the Province of Quebec by the IQOP, l'Institut québécois d'opinion publique, which is directed by people who are neither Liberals nor Progressives Conservatives but who belong to a provincial party. That survey was made in a way that I consider scientific. It was made by an agency famous in this field and that specializes in surveys. Second, this agency made the survey according to a proven method. Consequently, it had more credibility because two factors were involved in the evaluation of the results. Third, the sample chosen was representative that is to say that voters were chosen according to their location in urban centers and rural areas were also well represented so that the sample reflected the province's sociological pattern if I may say so. Last, the period at which the survey was made was also taken into account.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that a survey made under those conditions, those four factors being taken into account, can allow the voter to reach convincing and useful conclusions. Moreover, if a poll is conducted by a host on an open-line program at lunch time, in the afternoon, when people are busy doing anything but getting serious information and debating political matters, if results are broadcast by a station, by a host who knows nothing about sociology, a host who simply answers calls from radio listeners, if those polls are conducted by people who may already have their own opinion and may tend to influence the results of the survey, such polls, in my opinion, have no credibility whatsoever and finally prove that Professor Harris was absolutely right in concluding that such polls have a marginal effect on the voters' choice.