

Supply

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Beatty: You surpassed your usual standard.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to arise and join in the debate on what I consider to be a very important topic and a very important resolution. Today we have heard hon. members of the government explain to us how important government advertising is in order to inform members of the Canadian public of the various programs of the government. For example, the Secretary of State (Mr. Regan) maintained that the press is not capable of doing their job. In fact, he even went so far as to suggest it really was not the job of the press to inform Canadians of the ins and outs of government programs.

● (2100)

We just heard the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Blais) give us a tremendous oration. It really boggled my mind. He suggested that the Conservative opposition to the metric system justifies the government's using public funds to counter their arguments. That statement by the Minister of Supply and Services really shows what the government intends to do with its advertising money, that is to use it primarily for political purposes.

All their attempts to wrap themselves in the great nationalist flag, is phony, totally phony and has always been phony. The Liberal Party is master at wrapping itself in the Canadian flag and insinuating that anyone who disagrees with them is not nationalistic, is against Canada, is against the country. The Liberal Party does not have a monopoly on being Canadian. It is the government that is defying and soiling some great Canadian traditions.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): They are giving government a bad name.

Mr. de Jong: Indeed they are. The symbols that are important to us as a country, the flag, the coat of arms and our institutions, have all been soiled by the propaganda efforts of those opposite. No wonder as a country today we lack a sense of purpose, a sense of unity and a sense of direction. It is because of the shallow propaganda that is being used to brainwash the people of Canada, particularly in the last decade, by members opposite.

They have developed these tools of propaganda to ever finer and finer degrees. They have used information from the Department of National Revenue, for example, to get selected mailing lists in order to direct their propaganda missiles to particular groups among the Canadian population. No longer is there a sense that the information from the Department of National Revenue should be kept within that department and not be used by the propaganda effort of the government.

All these types of traditions have long gone out the window with the desperate people sitting opposite. They talk about the need for public polling in order to create a sensitive, responsive government. What a laugh! It is really a 1984 type of double-talk and rhetoric. They use public opinion polls to mould and change public opinion rather than to respond to it.

For example, in the early part of this year the Ministry of Transport apparently got Mr. Goldfarb to do an extensive survey on the opinions of western Canadians on the Crow agreement. In the last few weeks, that information leaked out. Through some articles in the Regina *Leader-Post* we learned that the vast majority of producers in Saskatchewan are adamantly opposed to any changes in the Crow rate. When the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) visited Saskatoon and apparently forgot his briefing notes and somebody picked them up, the result of the poll was described in terms of having discovered widespread misunderstanding in western Canada as to the intentions with regard to the Crow.

It is not a case of misunderstanding. If anybody reads the results of that survey, they will find that the farmers of Saskatchewan know what it is all about, in fact to an amazing, sophisticated degree. There is not a misunderstanding.

The fact is that the Liberal government decided it had better first test public opinion in the west. They discovered it is totally against their proposals for changing the Crow rate. I suggest that in the not too distant future we will see a whole advertising campaign trying to correct these "misunderstandings". They call that responsive government. It is straight out of 1984 double-think and double-talk. It is frightening.

To say that my friends to my right are innocent and blameless would also be stretching the truth a little too far. Surely the short experience of the Clark government demonstrated that they too were seduced by the power of polls and advertising. They did their Quebec polling just before the referendum brought out that the people of Quebec were not quite taken in by the Clark government. As well, they did polling among the ethnic community to determine what that community felt about the Clark government. They are not innocent. The Ontario government is not innocent. I might suggest that no political party, including my own when in power, is not seduced by the polling and advertising efforts.

That is why the resolution before us today is so important. I regret the type of debate we have had, particularly from government members. It is important because as techniques for propaganda and psychological manipulation of masses get further and further refined, some very fundamental dangers face the Canadian people.

It is unfortunate that I did not have an opportunity to discuss the Constitution when it was before us. I felt in many ways the Constitution was a nineteenth century liberal document dealing with old struggles. The problems we will be facing in the twentieth century are a lot different. This is one area of propaganda, not just by government but by private power groups as well. There are new techniques and new ways through the electronic media of controlling the flow of information and being able to create illusions and impressions. There are some very real dangers, dangers that this Parliament should in all honesty be addressing and looking at seriously. Unfortunately, the debate today does not begin to recognize the seriousness of the matter before us.