

Privilege—Mr. Broadbent

may be that when we put a question to the people in order to get their views, the answer could reveal a policy. As we all know, the policy has to be revealed in the House of Commons first—

Mr. Broadbent: That is precisely the point.

Mr. Chrétien:—and not in a sneaky way. The hon. member asked for an example. Other questions were put on other matters, and I do not have them here but they will be made available as soon as possible. If the hon. member feels that as soon as a department receives the result of a poll it should be tabled in the House, then he can ask for it, but I do not think that is very sensible. I do not think that is done anywhere. If we are serious about this and not doing it only for the fun of it, it should have some aim and some objective. The result should be analysed by the government before it is made public.

Mr. Broadbent: Why not by the opposition as well?

Mr. Chrétien: We accept the rule that in the future, when we commission polls and the results have been used for the elaboration of policy, then we will make them public.

Mr. Dick: Madam Speaker, a point of order—

Mr. Epp: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp).

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Madam Speaker, I should like to speak on this point of privilege that has been raised by the hon. member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent).

An hon. Member: That is not a point of order.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I was just about to recognize the hon. member as I thought he wanted to speak on the question of privilege. Is the hon. member rising on the question of privilege or on a point of order?

Mr. Epp: The question of privilege, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Before I recognize the hon. member, I want to tell the House that I have a bit of a problem with this question of privilege. First of all, it is very close to the one discussed yesterday in the House and which I took under advisement. Second, it seems to have been used to introduce a substantive motion that might be worth while discussing. That type of motion may come into another procedure and I shall want to examine the matter further.

From the interventions that I have heard until now, I do not see that we have broken any of the rules or practices of this House. It is not clear to me yet that there is a question of privilege. I would therefore ask future speakers to focus on the reasons for the question of privilege. That would be very helpful to the Chair.

Mr. Epp: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am going to relate how I believe the privileges of this House and of every member are affected by the use of polls.

First of all, I support the position taken by the hon. member for Oshawa regarding polls and their use. We have to keep in mind that these polls are conducted through the use of public funds.

Second, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) said that these polls, these publicly funded polls, are used "to develop a strategy"—

Mr. Chrétien: And policy.

Mr. Epp: Then he went on to say that the questions used in the polls are for the purpose of gaining certain information which the government wants. But to gain certain information for what purpose?

Mr. Nielsen: For designing advertising.

Mr. Epp: To design advertising. To design policies and strategy?

Mr. Broadbent: For the government.

Mr. Epp: For the government—that is the point—and at public expense. If it is done at public expense, then that information should be available to every member of the House and to the public generally.

I do not want to get into the substantive motion of yesterday relating to advertising, but the point is that the polls are used, first of all, to find out what the public is thinking and then to design an advertising package so that the public can be manipulated and moved toward a policy that the government has already established.

Some hon. Members: Right on.

Mr. Epp: That is what the government is trying to do, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Chrétien: On a question of privilege, Madam Speaker—

● (1230)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) cannot rise on a question of privilege when there is already one on the floor, which I am hearing. The hon. member for Provencher.

Mr. Epp: As I said, Madam Speaker, I will not get into the advertising matter. We have seen enough advertising now related to the polling data which the government had received earlier. Just yesterday that point was debated in this House. When members got back to their offices last night they had additional advertising information, related again to polling information which the government received earlier. This speaker's kit is based on certain polling data which the government had received, in trying to move the public to a government position that has not even been concluded in this House.