

Borrowing Authority Act

ment can possibly come up with. In 1982-83 the advertising budget of the federal government is \$70 million, compared to \$63 million in 1981-82 and \$54 million in 1980-81.

Have you noticed, Mr. Speaker, the sort of advertising this government has been promoting, what it has been doing? Have you noticed that it actually says very little about the programs that in essence they are supposed to be trying to promote? If you believe that they do say very little, you are absolutely correct; and if you think it is expensive, you are absolutely correct as well.

The number two advertiser in this country is General Foods. The number one advertiser, in terms of dollars spent, is this government, our very own Liberal Government of Canada. Just how much more do they spend than General Foods? They spend about twice as much. General Foods spends about \$35 million a year. The Government of Canada, not to come close, wants to make sure it is out there in front, and it is spending \$70 million, at least, this year.

The traditional role of government advertising is to provide information on services or to advertise changes to regulations. This government has deviated substantially from this sort of traditional program. Little of this year's \$70 million will actually be used to advertise or make the public aware of regulation amendments or to provide service information. The bulk of the advertising will be to relay the general purposes of many departments and flogging the Liberal's own messages, in an attempt to prop up the sinking ship.

In this past year alone the federal government has launched four massive media campaigns directed toward promoting government policy, to making Liberal actions popular with Canadians.

Last summer Ottawa launched a \$3.25 million advertising campaign, promoting the National Energy Program. A second campaign launched last summer promoted the Constitution, in an effort to counteract the bad publicity they had been receiving and the bitter sentiments that were arising from the federal-provincial negotiations and to bring Canadians alongside the Liberal stance.

A second constitutional advertising campaign was launched this spring, to herald in the new constitution and charter. It was a two-week campaign and cost Canadian taxpayers \$3 million. It was organized by the Canadian Unity Information Office. It was designed to convince Canadians that "the future belongs to us."

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is very sad commentary on the new Constitution. The opponents, rightly so, contended that it was not so much a measure to inform the public about the Constitution as to divert their attention away from the disastrous economic problems that face the nation.

Last fall, Mr. Speaker, the federal government took out some \$130,000 worth of full-page advertisements in 100 newspapers on budget day to advise Canadians about its plans for "sound economic development". This is perhaps the boldest and most blatant misuse of public funds spent on promoting government policies. To this date we do not have a budget.

Currently the government is spending \$5 million on an advertising campaign "Helping Canada Work". Employment and Immigration officials contend that the advertisements promote job creating and skill development and suggest that despite economic problems the Canadian economy is working as a whole. What a laugh! I think that Canada's 1.2 million unemployed and our struggling businessmen could well find a better use for that money.

Let us take another look at the difficulties that this government is encountering and trying to prop up with these slick advertising campaigns. They have taken out a series of full colour newspaper advertisements promoting the federal contribution to agricultural research. It does little except to promote the federal image. It does not help the countless farmers in this nation who faced bankruptcy or who are currently facing bankruptcy. Unfortunately, it is this type of advertisement that is offered by almost every government department. It is doing no good and brings little or no benefit to the general public.

Let us put aside the blatant political aspect of government advertising. Let us take a look at the business side of the problem. Competitive bidding is the hard and fast rule when it comes to awarding contracts for construction or for government purchases. However, political patronage is the golden rule of this government when it comes to advertising. To manage the government's advertising needs, this Liberal government has hired a firm called Canadian Media Corporation. This corporation is a consortium of Liberal advertising agencies, which is assembled for the sole purpose of servicing the government's advertising needs. The patronage system is no longer used in the United States. It is not used in Great Britain or in most other developed countries. In a legitimate government, advertising for good purposes is indeed laudable, but not for this government. The firms involved in looking after this government's needs are receiving patronage dollars.

Another aspect of government advertising to be considered is the federal government's exemption from the advertising code of ethics. This government does not have to adhere to the code of ethics that every other advertiser in the nation must live up to. What is more important is what the government has got out of it and what the Liberal Party has got out of it. It is a device which the Liberal Party is mounting, it is a device by which this party in power is attempting to mould and to manipulate public opinion. We fear that the increasing use of this sort of advertising will lead to government by propaganda, and that is exactly what the government is trying to develop. The government is using our tax dollars, tax dollars which the public would no doubt far rather see being used in other areas. It is highly irregular in a free country, in a democratic country, in a country that has a so-called democratically-elected government, that it would become involved in an advertising campaign and an advertising scheme of this nature. It is particularly appalling when those same advertising dollars, \$70 million this year, could address a multitude of genuine fiscal problems. It is, in our opinion, Mr. Speaker, political abuse at its very worst.