

If this kind of technique of going to the public with advertising and polling, as the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) outlined a few moments ago, cannot be stopped by Madam Speaker or the members of this House, then in four or five years it will not matter if there is an election or not.

We all know that hon. gentlemen and ladies opposite are the governing party of Canada, but the fact still remains that we on this side of the House should have a fair chance of trying to become the Government of Canada, either the NDP or the Progressive Conservative Party. If Madam Speaker cannot protect us, we will have to appeal to the better judgment of hon. members opposite who have engaged in a very dangerous practice. The parliamentary secretary said that he wanted the people of Canada to be fully informed on the issues. How can they be fully informed on the issues in an advertising campaign? The whole purpose of an advertising campaign is to obscure the issues and to put across one simple point of view. That is the whole point. That is why Premier Blakeney talks about an advertising war for which they may have to get ready in Saskatchewan. It is not to put across the truth.

How could this campaign put across the truth if our views are not given to the public also? We may agree that there is some need for constitutional change in Canada, but we have a different view of what kind of constitutional change is needed and how it should be done. We certainly do not think that it should be done by this Parliament changing, by itself, the rights and responsibilities and jurisdiction of the provinces, which is what the resolution we are debating now will do. In fact we believe it will seriously threaten the unity of this country. Is our view being put across in these advertisements, or the view of the NDP? They are not. It is only the view of the majority that is being put across. They are not putting across a view. They are trying to give the impression that all they are doing is floating through the air like geese while they are trying to bring the Constitution of Canada from Westminster to Canada. That is not what they are trying to do at all. They are not trying to explain the complexities of this proposal, in their ads, what the amending formula is, what will be done and why, what the charter of human rights is, and what the exceptions to it are. When I get my chance to speak on it, I will point out its inadequacies. It is totally inadequate. It is a Liberal piece of hypocrisy. None of that has been explained in these polls.

I am not sure whether this has been referred to before, but it is something else for Madam Speaker to consider. The government's own advisers have raised a serious question with the government as to whether or not this is proper. Everybody in Canada has taken notice of what is known as the Kirby memorandum that put out the blueprint for the first ministers' conference in September. It is headed "Continuing Information Program—Constitutional Renewal" and reads in part as follows:

The fundamental question to be addressed concerns the legitimacy of spending taxpayers' dollars to promote what will be deemed by many to be a politically partisan position. Ministers may want to note that selling federal constitutional proposals is quite different from the Quebec referendum campaign, when all

federal parties basically supported the government's position and hence did not object strongly to federal advertising.

That put the question squarely to cabinet from its own public service. Normally we do not see this, but we can send Madam Speaker a copy of the whole 62-page document. You should have a look at it before making a decision. It continues:

Moreover, ministers should recognize the important distinction between the use of advertising as a negotiating tactic and its use as a tool to sell the government's programs or policies over the head of the opposition.

This is what the memorandum brought out. Then it goes on to describe the role of government advertising as follows:

During the summer, government advertising played a significant tactical role in two ways. First, it helped to keep the issue . . . before the public . . . Second, it helped to persuade the provinces that the federal government was not bluffing . . .

But once the government has decided what action it intends to take, and Parliament has been reconvened to debate that proposed action, the role of advertising changes. At that point, public funds are being used to sell the governing party's position, yet such funds are not made available to opposition parties. Thus, the opposition has no effective way to respond, in contrast to the provinces which can and did during the summer respond by running their own advertising programs. Under these circumstances, ministers need to decide if advertising is politically legitimate.

My advice to you, Madam Speaker, is that if there is any way you can hold in favour of this question of privilege, then you should hold in favour of this question of privilege, and that the burden of proof is on the government. Madam Speaker must be interested in the rights of this House and in this House being anything but just a punching bag for the government. If not, we in the opposition will become a punching bag for gentlemen opposite who will take their polls and get their responses from the public, learn how to couch their campaigns in all simplicity without explaining the complications of their proposals, and not show us the results.

We are paying for it. It is taxpayers' money that is paying for it, the taxpayers of Canada. All these polls are supposed to do is find out what they think. That is not to be shared with us. Then the government will bring in legislation, have a referendum and so on. The hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) the other day pointed out what the government could do with the referendum, using these same techniques. If Madam Speaker has any way at all of finding for us on this question of privilege, I hope you will do so and I hope you will reserve your judgment. If Madam Speaker cannot hold for us, then believe me it will be tough for the government ever to change in the country or for this body ever to regain any of the importance or influence it once had.

Mr. Collenette: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order because I have become somewhat disturbed as the debate has gone on. Perhaps it is a reflection of Your Honour's continual attempt to be fair to all members, but there are members on this side of the House who wish to participate in the debate. A few minutes ago you said that you would entertain one more. At least eight speakers from the opposition have made their case, and I think fairness would demand an equal right of reply. I hope Madam Speaker would entertain further interventions from this side.