

Oral Questions

In fact, one of the major banks has now a very increased percentage of women in senior management.

Obviously there is always room for improvement but I have full confidence that there are mechanisms between the banks and the employees and unions to work out these situations.

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THE CONSTITUTION

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs.

Recently the *Montreal Gazette* reported that in a letter to Southam News relaying the government's position, Information Commissioner John Grace said that the government is keeping public opinion polls on the Constitution locked away because of an "extremely volatile public environment".

These polls have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, obviously paid for with public funds. It would only make sense to me that the public should have access to this information.

Will the minister now release these polls to allow Canadians to make up their own minds on the constitutional question? What perhaps would this government have to hide?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (President of the Privy Council and Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the hon. member knows, this is a matter that is still in negotiation between *The Ottawa Citizen* and the commissioner and she would not want me to interfere with that process.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Mr. Speaker, I realize that the government is not used to allowing the public to take part in matters of state. We have seen that all too painfully in the last few hours. I think this time we need to make exceptions.

I ask this minister again: Will he not release the said public opinion polls on the Constitution? If he refuses to do so today, then when can the Canadian people expect to see the results that they have paid for in this and also the constitutional proposals that have been left up to a committee of only 30 people to determine with directives from the PMO?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (President of the Privy Council and Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I answered the first question the first time. With regard to public participation, let me make two points.

One has to do with the practice of some political parties in this country. When there is dissent in their ranks they act immediately to throw out the dissenters. This is despite clear undertakings that were given by her leader when he first became the leader of her party that never would he, as a leader, support the right of a party leader to deny the use of the party label to a candidate who disagreed with the leader. The Reform Party says one thing on the hustings and does another thing in practice.

With regard to the question of public participation, we have just come through a quite extraordinary process of public participation on the Constitution to which representatives of the Reform Party were invited.

I have heard two political parties that whined and complained about that process: one was the Bloc Quebecois, the other was the Reform Party of Canada which did not want to hear Canadians who said things that it did not agree with.

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• (1150)

TAXATION

Mr. Scott Thorkelson (Edmonton—Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Finance.

The Reform Party would like to eliminate tax credits and tax deductions which the government uses to achieve desirable social and economic goals. It wants to do this by instituting a regressive flat tax.

Would the minister inform the House how the Reform Party's flat tax would affect families and working people?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, the flat tax proposal as I understand it from the Reform Party would allow no deductions at all. Therefore their system would help the upper-middle income and wealthy people of this country and penalize the lower-middle income and the poor working families.