

which comes under my responsibility. One poll was conducted in this area by the previous administration. I am glad to have the permission of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) to publish the polls of that administration. We obtained from these polls some very useful information on questions related to certain problems in Quebec at the time of the referendum, and we used them to develop strategy. At the time of the referendum other polls were conducted to determine if attitudes had changed.

These polls will be made public, but I do not know when. Some of the polls will be ready next Wednesday and the others one week following. The document is very complicated and thick, and I do not think that it would be advisable to make one for everybody because it would amount to stacks of papers. We want to assure the House that if some members or some people want them, they will be available. We will make the results available to the House very quickly from the Canadian Unity Information Services.

● (1220)

Some results will not be available at this time because that is the rule. I understand the situation in the bill on information is that if there is a request for information, a certain period of time will be required, perhaps a couple of months, in which to make that information available and so on.

I do think, however, that sometimes questions are asked in a context that is only for the purpose of getting some information from the government. When the situation does not call for any further confidentiality, we will then make the information available. I think that any normal administrator will understand that there could be questions in specific areas where at a certain time it is not in the interests of the House or the public to make the information public.

An hon. Member: For example?

Mr. Chrétien: If I had been caught in that situation during the referendum, there would have been a problem. The hon. Leader of the Opposition and his party commissioned a survey that cost about \$100,000 in December, when it was done. I got six surveys for the same price later on—I probably made a better deal! There is no question, however, that it would not have been useful or in the public interest to make them available at that time. I had the responsibility, and I was very well supported by all members of the House, of making sure that the case for Canada, from the federal point of view, was put to the Quebec people in the most effective way. At that time I felt it was very important that I use the poll made by the Leader of the Opposition and his party in December, so I used it. In that respect—

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

Madam Speaker: The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

Mr. Clark: It is a very simple point of order, Madam Speaker. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) is slipping

into a usage which did not prevail, at least in our day. He referred to me and my party as having commissioned the polls. That is not the case; they were commissioned by the Government of Canada, of which I was then the leader. I am sure it was simply a slip of the tongue, but an important one.

Mr. Chrétien: Madam Speaker, it is very clear that the right hon. member was the Leader of the Government at that time. I will refer to the Progressive Conservative government of last year, which commissioned the poll. I have used it effectively so I am glad they did it. I do not blame them for that, because it has been very useful.

Of the 141 polls, some consisted of only one question, asked by one department in one set of circumstances. We will make them available as soon as possible. The ones which come directly under my jurisdiction—which are some of the most controversial and which were done by the Canadian Unity Information office—some of these will be available next Wednesday or perhaps the Monday following even sooner, if possible. We will not give the whole package to everybody, but anyone who wants to check them can go to the office and do so. It would be extremely costly to make those stacks of documents available to everybody. There are three done under the direction of the Canadian Unity Information office, that we commissioned in the last few months. Questions are related to energy, to the present debate, and so on. I think we still need them in order to elaborate on policies, but we will make them available as soon as possible.

Perhaps it would be advisable to develop a rule in the near future. I do think, however, that there is absolutely no question of privilege. If hon. members are not satisfied with the answers they receive in the House whenever the government spends money, then there is a rule that a committee will scrutinize all government spending. The ministers appear at the estimates committees and questions can be put to them then. I think, with due respect, Madam Speaker, there is absolutely no question of privilege. If the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) or the Leader of the Opposition wants to debate the policy on polls, it can be done in other forums, such as when the estimates of every department are debated.

Mr. Broadbent: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I wonder if the minister would answer a question. He referred to 141 polls that have been done, a good number of which he was going to make available, and 12 of which he was going to keep private and confidential.

Mr. Chrétien: For the time being.

Mr. Broadbent: I want to make it clear that we do not agree with that. We would like to know the subject matter of the 12 polls that he is going to keep private.

Mr. Chrétien: Madam Speaker, I do not have the details at this time. One is based on the question of energy. It was requested in order to be able to develop the energy policy that will be made public soon. It could be that if it were released at this time, the substance of it would make the policy public. It