

budget for the publicly paid, partisan Liberal constitution advertising has been approved by Treasury Board to increase for this fiscal year from \$9 million to \$30 million or \$35 million, against all the arguments which have been made by the other side. Can the President of the Treasury Board confirm that?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board): Madam Speaker, I have not seen the reports in question.

Some hon. Members: Come on!

Mr. Johnston: I would be happy to review them if the hon. member would be kind enough to provide me with them.

Mr. Bosley: Madam Speaker, I suppose I am not surprised that the President of the Treasury Board does not know anything about matters before the Treasury Board. He has shown that with respect to the labour negotiations of the last three or four weeks.

Can he tell me, please, whether the fact that the memo which was discussed in debate at the first ministers' constitutional conference has not been government policy—the memo says that 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—would lead him, should there ever be a request to increase this pork-barrelling by the Liberal government, to accept his responsibility as President of the Treasury Board and refuse any increases in this politically partisan budget?

Mr. Johnston: Madam Speaker, it is not our practice in the Treasury Board to make decisions, on the basis of press commentary, as to whether expenditure is or is not a good thing.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN MINISTER AND PRIME MINISTER THATCHER ON CONSTITUTION

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the Secretary of State for External Affairs would give the House a brief summary of his four-minute discussion with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on constitutional matters.

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of the Environment, and I spent almost an hour with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

An hon. Member: How many in the waiting room and how many talking to her?

Mr. MacGuigan: We explained to her the details of the government's proposal for patriating the constitution and other

matters in the proposed resolution. We explained our reasons and discussed with her the timetable problems she faced and her gracious willingness to organize her timetable in such a way as to accommodate us.

Mr. Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I wonder if in his brief report the Secretary of State for External Affairs would include the reply he received, if any, or any assurance he received from the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and if in that brief time he was also able to explain to her the 12 or 14 other viable and meaningful alternatives to the government proposal which exist.

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, it is the Government of Canada which is adviser to the United Kingdom government on matters affecting the Canadian constitution, not the opposition and not the provinces.

Mr. Clark: Parliament?

Mr. MacGuigan: Parliament advises the United Kingdom parliament and government; but in speaking of constitutional advice, constitutional advice is given by our government to their government. For the information of the hon. member, we did not go cap in hand to ask for anything.

Mr. Crosbie: You went with truncheon in hand.

Mr. MacGuigan: We went to explain. We had assurances from previous occasions that the constitution convention would be accepted by the British government and, I might say, by the opposition parties as well.

An hon. Member: Did you put up billboards?

Mr. MacGuigan: The discussion centred on the modalities rather than on the substance.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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FISHERIES

INQUIRY RESPECTING GOVERNMENT AID TO B.C. SALMON FISHERMEN

Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. The minister will be fully aware that the B.C. salmon fishing industry was at least disastrous this year as a result of lower runs of salmon, increased cost of borrowing money, increased cost of equipment and lower prices for salmon. The minister will also be aware that many fishermen in British Columbia are in serious jeopardy and threatened with the loss of their vessels. I would like to ask the minister if he or his government at this time have any aid program to announce to assist those fishermen and, if so, when will it be introduced, and under what kind of program is the minister hoping to aid those fishermen?