

Supply

problems in this country, and if the hon. member was able to convince his caucus to use an opposition day in these times to talk about the slight difference between the advertising when this government is in office compared with when his government was in office, then they were either feeling sorry for him because he has not had an opportunity to put forward anything in recent times, or they were pretty hard up for something to talk about.

Mr. Beatty: What is \$40 million to you, Gerry?

Mr. Regan: Mr. Speaker, I talked about the fact that when they were in government, they advertised, but they take a different stand in opposition. What do their friends do in the provinces? The province of Ontario, according to the best information I can find, is spending \$18.6 million a year on advertising. How would you like to apply that per capita as against the Government of Canada reaching a public that is spread across the entire country and is, therefore, much more expensive to reach on each subject with which the government has to deal? Or would the hon. member like to talk about—

• (1550)

Mr. McDermid: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point or order. I do not think the minister would like to mislead the House when he mentions government advertising by the province of Ontario. I think he would find a good portion is tourist advertising—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. Corrections can be made when the hon. member is recognized in the debate.

Mr. Regan: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had been paying attention, he would have heard me talk about the fact that the Government of Canada is spending a lot of money on advertising for tourists. Not only in Ontario but in all of the provinces, substantial advertising programs are undertaken.

The other quarrel I have with the hon. member, before I move on to some other matters, is that he keeps talking about advertising being done for the advantage of one political party. Advertising done by a government is not done for a political purpose. It is not done for the advantage of one party.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Regan: The hon. member's problem is that he cannot accept the fact his candy was snatched from him after only eight months in office. It is not a question of two political parties; it is a question of government having responsibility to the public while it is in an elected position, quite apart from political responsibilities. The government has the responsibility to advertise those programs which the public needs and about which it wants to be informed. Frankly, based on my experience, I doubt whether we advertise enough. I doubt whether any government advertises enough. I find again and again, not only while this government is in office but under other governments that a tremendous number of people do not know about government programs which they should know about. Does the

hon. member feel that it is enough that we pass a program to provide assistance to people who apply for insulation grants?

Miss MacDonald: Look at what you did with UFFI.

Mr. Regan: Is it enough to allow it to be reported by the media despite the fact that many people in the country do not get a daily newspaper? Or is there a responsibility to sell that program and have all Canadians know about it? A government that is not visible is not answerable. A program that is not visible will not be fully used. Government functions better if people are well informed. I believe that electoral decisions, when they come, should be based on solid information and that a government has its opportunity, its right and its responsibility to place factually—and I stress factually—before the public its policies and laws.

The hon. member says that government should not in any way be placing any adversarial information before the public. I suppose he recognizes that both opposition members and government members are allowed to send out householders at government expense. If you want to start looking at truth in advertising, the first thing to look at would be some of the householders compiled by backbenchers of the Conservative party—the real rednecks—and read some of the things which have been put in their householders over the past two years.

Mr. Huntington: Read Ken Robinson's householders. They make good reading.

Mr. Regan: Political parties at election time are given funds for advertising that are certainly adversarial in nature. Those are the sort of exceptions to adversarial advertising, and I think they are probably justified. All parties have supported them in the past.

What sort of things do we advertise as a government? Let us talk about the fact that 75 per cent to 80 per cent of government campaigns are informational, that examples of such campaigns are aimed at attitude changing. Should we advertise water safety as the Department of Transport does? What about anti-smoking? Should we advertise that as we do? What about Hire-a-Student which is advertised by the Department of Employment and Immigration? What about the advertising of seat belt use by the Department of Transport? What about RCMP recruitment? What about the advert for moderation in drinking? What about the availability of government services? What about nutrition? What about the Department of Public Works tender calls? What about armed forces recruitment and what about public service recruitment? What about those sorts of things?

I think what the hon. member is doing is thrashing old straw. If he took the time to find out, he would see that advertising by this government is of the nature I have already outlined.

Let us discuss the self-serving nature of some of the more important government investments in advertising. A little while ago I used the example of the government office of