

Privilege—Mr. Broadbent

approval is given in the first issue of *The Canada Gazette*; secondly, the list being published in *The Canada Gazette* should include the subject matter of the poll, the name of the firm awarded the contract, the amount of the contract and the dates set out in the contract for receipt of the completed survey results by the minister or agent of the minister, and, finally, all polls listed in *The Canada Gazette* should automatically be tabled by the minister concerned on the next sitting day after the date of receipt set out in *The Gazette*.

This, in other words, would put all members in this House on an equal basis. Opposition members, government members and cabinet members alike would have the same data which is paid for by the people of Canada. That is the question of privilege. If you find, Madam Speaker, that I do have a case of privilege, I would be prepared to move, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles):

That the question of the right of members of Parliament to information obtained by the government to polls financed by public funds be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for consideration and report.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I would have been pleased to defer taking the floor to allow my colleague, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien), but I will proceed for the moment to speak largely in support of the proposal and the suggestion which have been made by the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) regarding the importance of having this question considered, and the policy developed, by Parliament. I agree with the Leader of the New Democratic Party that that process may well be made unnecessary if the government is prepared to accept the proposals which have been made by the Leader of the New Democratic Party.

I would point out that this matter has been alluded to in debate recently in this House by, I believe, one of the members from the New Democratic Party, who made the point that the practice of polling has been carried out by New Democratic Party governments in Saskatchewan, by Progressive Conservative governments across the country, including the period I had the honour to lead the Government of Canada, and by Liberal governments.

When we were the Government of Canada we wrestled with the question of whether or not to publish polls which had been carried out by our government. Our decision was that it would be appropriate and proper for those polls to be published. As I indicated yesterday, in the period of time we were the Government of Canada, three public opinion polls were commissioned. One poll had to do with federal-provincial relations, another with energy, and another with multiculturalism.

The poll having to do with energy was the subject of a request by a member of Parliament, who asked that it be published. That request was acceded to and the poll was made available. In addition, and far more important, we had issued instructions to officials of the Government of Canada in all relevant departments that, in keeping with the freedom of information bill which we introduced—a bill which, I would remind the House, went much further in protecting the public right to information than the bill which has been introduced by

the present Liberal government—the practice should be followed of responding positively to any request to publish any poll. That is to say, if a poll was conducted by the Government of Canada and if there was a request to have it published, it should be published.

What is being proposed today by the Leader of the New Democratic Party is that we go a step further. Speaking on behalf of my party, I have no objection at all to the provision that there be no waiting for a request, that there be an automatic triggering so that public opinion sampling carried out in the name of the people of Canada could be available directly to the representatives of the people of Canada assembled in this Parliament.

I might add that certainly if agreement is reached, the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) need have no question that we would be prepared to have published today the two polls which were conducted during the tenure of the Progressive Conservative government that have not yet been made public.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, first of all I believe that on the substance of the matter there is no question of privilege. It is purely a matter of government housekeeping policy, and whether polls are taken or not, it is a well known practice that is recognized throughout the world. I think questions can be asked in the House but the privileges of members are not at all affected here and I think the motion of the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) is frivolous and is quite simply much more intended to raise a matter for debate than a question of privilege. In any case, Madam Speaker,—

[English]

For example, since March, 1979, there were 141 polls taken by different departments. This includes polls in which there was one question asked by a particular department interested in a specialized field and wishing to collect information from the different organizations and companies in that field. For the amount of \$1,000, \$2,000 or \$3,000, these departments obtain their information on one precise question. These questions may be related to postal services, transportation services, energy and so on.

The government decided to check with every department to determine how many polls were completed since the beginning of 1979. We obtained the figure of 141. That does not mean that they were all necessarily all-encompassing polls. In some cases the poll consisted of one question by one department and cost \$1,000 or \$2,000. Now that we have collected these polls, we are prepared to release all of them except for 12. One hundred and twenty-nine polls will be released. The other polls have not been completed, or are currently being used. When these polls are no longer being used they will be made public.

For example, some of the most controversial polls taken were instigated by the Canadian Unity Information Office