

secret. She then assumed that if she could not have this information as an individual, then surely her member of parliament could, and she asked me to find the answers to those same questions. I asked for these answers and I, in turn, the member representing Mrs. Sheremeta and thousands of other individuals in Fraser Valley West, was denied access to this very basic and simple information. Information Canada in a letter to me said:

● (2220)

The information you requested was not considered classified or secret by Statistics Canada.

If it is not classified or secret, why can I or Mrs. Sheremeta not have the information? Apparently, the reason is because the Department of Justice decided not to furnish this information, which was conveyed by telephone to my office. The letter goes on to say:

Your office was informed that the prosecution considered the information irrelevant—

If the information was not secret, not classified, and irrelevant to the case, why is Mrs. Sheremeta denied access and why am I, as a member of parliament, denied access to this information? I cannot understand that, and there is no logical answer. In addition to that the letter goes on to say:

—I am informed that the presiding judge was of the same view.

In other words, the prosecution is collaborating with the presiding judge to determine whether or not evidence which we may need or may not need should be released to us. I think that this is a very unfair persecution, not prosecution. Obviously the Crown attorney in the case was either fabricating the truth in some way, or lying in some way, because he said that the material was irrelevant. If it was irrelevant he would have released it to me.

This is just a small example of how the checks and balances so delicately built into our democratic system—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. member that his allotted time has expired.

Mr. Wenman: Mr. Speaker, may I ask for another two minutes to complete my remarks?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General (Mr. Young).

Mr. Wenman: Cut off again.

Mr. Roger Young (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, the Statistics Act does not currently

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permit Statistics Canada to undertake surveys on an explicit voluntary basis. Nonetheless, for a good number of years, the agency has successfully conducted many surveys, especially those of households, depending almost completely on the good will and voluntary co-operation of respondents. While the Statistics Act provides for the possibility of penalties for non-response, mention of such provisions is carefully avoided to ensure that no perception of threat or intimidation is present. The policy governing the behaviour of Statistics Canada enumerators in this regard is clearly set out in the booklet "Doorstep Diplomacy", which is a guide for interviewers, and reinforced in all training programs. Key passages in that booklet demonstrate the overriding desire of the agency to fulfil its mandate through co-operation, not compulsion.

Statistics Canada is aware, however, of the heightened public concern for privacy and confidentiality in recent years and is mindful of the need to preserve the best possible relations with respondents. The agency has thus undertaken a review of the many issues concerning the explicit use of the voluntary survey technique. After weighing the important considerations, Statistics Canada has determined that legal authority for the agency to conduct surveys on a voluntary basis, when it makes sense to do so, should be granted, and plans are under way to seek appropriate Statistics Act amendments.

Statistics Canada will be responsible for ensuring a careful and orderly implementation of any new voluntary survey authority, in a way that preserves the nation's vital socioeconomic data base. Overly rapid conversion to a system of voluntary surveys, before careful testing of the results, would be irresponsible and could seriously impair the quality of critical data series. In this regard it has long been clearly recognized by all who have examined this issue that no single approach to voluntary response is appropriate for all surveys.

The hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Wenman) has also made reference to a census case under Section 29 of the Statistics Act, concerning one of his constituents. The decision in that case has been appealed and thus the matter remains before the courts. It is worth noting, however, that in the judgment of the lower court the judge rules on a technicality in the evidence brought forward by the Crown to support the charge. The judge did not dismiss the case on the grounds of compulsory response, invasion of privacy or any of the other submissions made by the accused. The judge stated further that on these matters of legislation, parliament is supreme and the law must be carried out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.22 p.m.