

which contained information about pensions, or if it sent leaflets about family allowances to people receiving family allowances. I should like to ask the Acting Prime Minister, in all seriousness, if he thinks it is appropriate to mail general propaganda about the government's economic performance at public expense of \$100,000. The cost was confirmed this morning. Is that appropriate?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I feel it is the government's duty to inform the public. I have not read the document the hon. member has in his possession. I find it strange, however, that the hon. member should object to our providing information to people at the same time we are sending them their cheques. This is a procedure which the government has been following for a very long time whenever it wants to explain its policies.

I have not read this leaflet, but knowing the President of Privy Council, I am sure that the information is meant to illustrate the policy of the Canadian government, not those of a political party.

[*English*]

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I have a final supplementary. I will quote very briefly from the pamphlet. This pamphlet is going to pensioners and recipients of family allowance. It reads in part:

In coming months, you may go to your doctor or to a provincial hospital, visit a national park or a provincial museum. You will surely watch television or mail a few letters. Remember that federal funds help finance these public services—including those provided by provincial governments.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: Does the minister think it is appropriate to spend \$100,000 mailing this pamphlet to pensioners and recipients of family allowance? If he thinks it is appropriate to use public funds in that manner to propagandize his government's economic performance, why does the government not provide equal funds to opposition parties to state their side of the story?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I have listened very carefully, and there is nothing but the truth in what is written there. I think Canadians are entitled to know, when they receive a pension, that it is the people of Canada who pay for it and that those laws have been voted by the parliament of Canada. I think the hon. member would have a point if we were saying that this was provided by the Liberal party, but we have said that it has been provided by the government of Canada. Most of the things mentioned there have been voted for unanimously by this House. No one has ever voted against pension increases or national parks. All hon. members of parliament have voted for those in the past, and I am sure they will do so in the future.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

REASON MINISTER HAS NOT INTRODUCED A BUDGET

Mr. Gilles Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, my question was intended for the right hon. Prime Minister, or in his absence for the Deputy Prime Minister; but in view of the latter's absence, I shall have to put it to the Acting Deputy Prime Minister.

In a statement made during his tour yesterday of the Eastern Townships, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs admitted candidly that that gathering of ministers and Liberal members in Quebec had been organized to increase the Liberal representation in that area. Now, as far as we know, the House has not been prorogued yet and the minister took the liberty of denigrating the parliamentary opposition by claiming that we have been keeping the government from acting. Now, as that is a shameless lie, would the minister tell the House what is keeping the government from getting legislation passed and, in addition, from bringing in its annual budget? Is it because most of the ministers are out politicking in Quebec?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the first part of the question is somewhat unfair to the Prime Minister who left Ottawa today to meet the Secretary General of the United Nations, and even more unfair to the Deputy Prime Minister who, unfortunately, had to stay home because of illness. I have been asked several times before to take over during their absence.

Mr. Speaker, if I were to make observations every time the hon. member for Témiscamingue is not in the House of Commons, I would be standing up all the time. Now, Mr. Speaker, ministers and hon. members of the government have acquired the very good habit of visiting all parts of Canada to meet the people and hear their points of view, to explain our policies and try to establish better communications with the people.

Of course, in the Eastern Townships, there are two ridings which do not belong to us yet but I understand that the hon. leader of the Social Credit Party of Canada is very concerned; he is afraid of losing them—with reason, I think.

Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary.

As you can see, when a question is asked, they take pleasure in beating about the bush without answering it. Considering that the ministers are complaining in the province of Quebec that the opposition prevents them from legislating, and that when we want to ask them a question in the House, these ministers are not here, I repeat my first question: What prevents the Minister of Finance from introducing his budget now while the opposition is prepared to discuss the budget in the House, however ridiculous it may be?