

Supply

are certainly aware that a one year study on regional communications, a study commissioned by former Minister Johnston, has just been completed; its findings are that regional information officers cannot properly carry out their duties because they are kept in the dark by Ottawa. The report blames the very low level of knowledge of these officials. We are saying to the Deputy Ministers that they must ensure adequate regional information, so that all Canadians can benefit from it and not only those living in Ottawa, where 80 per cent of all information officers are residing.

Much has been said about the part played by Deputy Ministers in the area of information. We are being blamed for assessing the performance of Deputy Ministers and senior officials in part on the way they manage communications. In fact, as early as 1981, the government added its own criteria in the assessment of its officials. Historically, governments have tried to have it recognized that communications were part of the responsibilities of senior officials. We are emphasizing again this point now that we are trying to clarify the guidelines concerning the information officials may release. And in this evaluation process, we are emphasizing again communication planning. This is nothing new, it is a global approach to management.

We will remind the medias that they will criticize the government if they cannot communicate efficiently. For example, if the government does not keep the regions properly informed, we will be handed as insensitive to their needs.

Mr. Speaker, I think that those comments had to be made and I believe that the media will play their part. We have been elected and I do not believe that a single journalist in Canada was elected to make comments in his paper. If they want to administer the country, let them get elected as we did and support a government who has done very much to promote freedom of speech in Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments. I regret—
[English]

There are no comments or questions. We will proceed with debate.

Mr. George Baker (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate. It is indeed encouraging to hear the talk from the Government side about openness and consultation. I suppose, Mr. Speaker, that when one considers the motion which is being debated here in the House today and the reasons behind it, one can understand why in Canada today there is confusion in the minds of people as to what happened between the time of the election campaign and today.

I would like to quote some of the comments made at that time by the New Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) on social programs. The Prime Minister said:

We are committed to ensuring the full participation of every Canadian in the country's economic and social life. We will work to pull down the barriers which restrict full participation.

● (1710)

On regional development funds, the release says:

—in consultation with local and provincial authorities.

Consultation is the big word, it says:

Consultation will be the hallmark of the New Progressive Conservative approach to regional development.

On the offshore, it says:

—fairness, equity and opportunity govern the federal response—

On Atlantic Canada, it says:

—respected and consulted as partners. The Liberal legacy of conflict and bitterness will be replaced by a new approach based on co-operation, consultation and understanding.

On fisheries management, it says:

—mark the end of bureaucratic management of the fishery. The days of highly centralized control of the fishery . . . are over. We will usher in a new era of co-operation among the federal government, the provinces, the fishermen and processors.

On policy, it says:

—participate directly and openly in the formulation and monitoring of federal . . . policy . . . More decentralized decision making will result in quicker response times for resolving local problems.

Then we go to the PC handbook in which this is said:

We are committed to giving Canadians a well-managed, efficient and productive government. It will be a government open to public scrutiny—

At all times. On the PC Party in power, it says:

The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada believes that new attitudes and new approaches in government are the most important priority to bring about real change in Canada.

Then we got to reasons for voting Progressive Conservative. It reads:

We will put Canada back to work . . . free from excessive government intervention—

We can solve our problems together . . . working closely with other levels of government, with labour and business, and with individual Canadians to solve our problems together. We will be a government that listens carefully, and determines national policies after consulting with the people.

They will be open with the people of Canada. It says:

You can trust us. We have been calling for necessary changes to the style and management of government for the last 10 years.

We will achieve equality for women. We will work closely with the provinces, with voluntary organizations and training institutions—

The PC commitment . . . open, honest and accessible government begins with respecting the role of Parliament and giving it the power required to ensure government accountability.

Then the Conservatives say they are looking to the future. They are going to reduce the barriers to full participation. Well, Mr. Speaker, they might still be looking to the future but they are walking backwards.

When you look at the guidelines which have been talked about here today—

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Is that the end of the good part of the speech?