

sitting listening—but saying, “I welcome this opportunity to have this matter cleared so as a minister of the Crown I will know that the programs I bring forward are appropriate and have the backing of the House of Commons.” Surely that is something which ought to appeal to hon. members on all sides of the House because it is a deep question.

Many people do not agree with what the Leader of the Opposition said and says, but he made a point that we are into something new. If we had stumbled into television in the House of Commons the way we are stumbling into the powerful marriage of polls, television and media, then the grand experiment which was carried out in a non-partisan way would have been a failure. It was not a failure.

I do not say that the minister has no mandate to advertise, but I say that he has no mandate to advertise in a way which will undermine this institution, and if there is any question at all, as a responsible minister he should want to have that question resolved. I invite him now to consent to this motion being put so that he will be sure, in an area which is sensitive, that he not only has the backing of his parliamentary secretary, which is taken for granted, but also that he has the backing of the opposition and all members of this House, which he cannot always take for granted, but which is important that he have in terms of the kinds of promotional programs he is about to undertake.

Finally, it is no defence, as raised by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) and by some others in the course of the question period, to say that an ad has terminated. That does not end the question of privilege. The question is still here, the advertising program having been begun. I do not think I have much more to say, but I do invite the minister to rise to his feet and do what his colleague, the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy), did, that is to go to a committee of the House so that his program can be cleared. I think that will end the issue. Parliament will be a lot better if the issue is ended in that way.

● (1620)

Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood): Madam Speaker, I think the government has failed to make a very important distinction. I have listened with a great deal of interest to what the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) had to say and to what the Minister of State for Multiculturalism (Mr. Fleming) and his parliamentary secretary had to say. I think we have to recognize that there really is a difference between the government advertising information on government programs which are in existence and advocacy advertising.

The parliamentary secretary said that he can go to a school or elsewhere and find he cannot tell people that the government is involved. No one is objecting to that and, for goodness sake, we have certainly seen a plethora of advertisements, both federal and provincial. Every time you go by a bridge you find a plaque saying the federal government gave \$28,000 and the provincial government gave so-and-so, under the authorization of the hon. Joe and the hon. so-and-so, and everybody gets their name on it. This is part of the game, because that money

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has been authorized and approved. No one disapproves when the Government of Canada takes out an advertisement telling people what their rights are under the Canada Pension Plan, or when the government of Ontario takes out advertisements telling people what their rights are under the workmen's compensation act. The Tories do it in Ontario, the Liberals do it in Ottawa, and the NDP does it in Saskatchewan, and we cannot object to that because that is the dissemination of information. Of course it has a subliminal effect, and of course it has a political effect, but still it is information on a program which has been approved by Parliament.

However, there is a very different pattern going on and I want to refer to it. The pattern is that polls are being taken the questions in which are never revealed, nor the answers or results ever revealed. Perhaps I have a personal interest in this. My father wrote a book in 1939, together with Dr. Gallup, called “The Pulse of Democracy”. We expect and encourage the government to take the pulse of democracy from time to time. I disagree with the absurd statement made today by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that “we'll stop all polling,” putting our heads in the sand so as not to know what the state of public opinion is. This is not going to help things. Coming from an autocrat, this is not a surprising position, but speaking as someone who is a democrat, I think the taking of the pulse of democracy is a very important and healthy development.

Imagine, Madam Speaker, the contrast between two pictures which I am going to paint for you, between what the government has done and continues to do and what it would do, I think, in a parliamentary democracy where the privileges of all members of the House are treated equally. On one hand they are taking secret polls, refusing to release the results, and carrying out advocacy advertising. There is no other name for it, it is the advocacy of a particular position. It is not, as the parliamentary secretary says, merely stating that there is a general position which we all favour. The parliamentary secretary knows perfectly well that, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said, many of those ads are a sheer waste of money. But those kinds of ads can develop momentum of their own and are definitely identified with the attitudes, policies and particular constitutional proposals of the Liberal Party of Canada.

An hon. Member: No, not our particular ones.

Mr. Rae: Yes. The parliamentary secretary is shaking his head, but this is absolutely the case. I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that I will never look at a beaver or a Canada goose the same again. They look like Liberals in disguise.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rae: And the maple leaves, the clipper ships and the farmhouses. I watched all the ads. The principle is a key principle. Imagine the contrast between the taking of secret polls, refusing to publish the information, then carrying out advocacy advertising in all the media in Canada, and what the leader of my party and the hon. member for Winnipeg North