

Oral Questions

children from poor families is 2.5 times that for children from non-poor families, the list goes on and on. The statistics are getting worse, not better.

Tomorrow this House will discuss my motion M-261 which states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of reaffirming its commitment to seek to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000.

This motion was passed unanimously in 1989.

It is my hope that this Parliament and this government will once again reaffirm its commitment to the national fight against child poverty. It is important that Canadians know there is a commitment to this fight as well as policies which will seriously address it.

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[Translation]

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Benoît Serré (Timiskaming—French River): Mr. Speaker, last week, thousands of farmers, hunters and sportsmen, including many Quebecers, came to Parliament Hill to express their concern about new firearms legislation which would affect legitimate gun owners.

Members of the Bloc Québécois were notably absent. Nevertheless, I know that at least ten members privately oppose such controls, but they do not have the nerve to stand up and defend their constituents' rights and privileges. They prefer to toe the party line and follow their leader blindly. Who will defend the interests of Quebec's rural regions in the House of Commons?

I call on all farmers, hunters and sportsmen in Quebec to put pressure on Bloc members.

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[English]

THE REFORM PARTY

Mrs. Georgette Sheridan (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, last night CBC "Prime Time" exposed secret documents from Reform Party brass which seek to impose the party's right wing agenda on its membership at Reform's national convention in Ottawa next month.

While no surprise to me, no doubt the membership of the so-called party of reform will be alarmed by evidence of such old style politics. Reform campaigned on a promise to speak for the grassroots. Less than a year later the Reform Party brass has reneged on that promise, choosing instead to impose on the grassroots of the party resolutions and policy.

The Reform Party inner circle will impose its secret right wing agenda on its membership, like abolishing the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

As I recall, or is that recall—oops, a bad choice of words—such old style politics was to be strictly verboten.

• (1415)

The party of teledemocracy stands exposed. To abolish free speech press one. To abolish free assembly press two. To recall your Reform MP press three.

The Speaker: Welcome to wonderful Wednesday.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

1992 REFERENDUM

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said in the House last week that, and I quote: "no trace of any commitment was found" to reimburse Quebec for the expenses incurred in the referendum on the Charlottetown Accord. The truth is that there are not just traces but documents, including a letter dated December 15, 1993, from Mr. Bourassa, the Premier of Quebec at the time, to the then Prime Minister of Canada. This letter followed three other letters on the same subject to the federal Minister of Finance.

Why did the Prime Minister hide these letters from the House and the public?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I did not hide anything from the House. I said that in the government's files I found no commitment by Mr. Mulroney's Conservative government indicating that it would compensate the Government of Quebec. I was aware that requests had been made, and I did not make a secret of that. Some were made publicly. I knew that Mr. Bourassa had talked about this in the National Assembly. But what I did not find is a commitment from the federal government. I got in touch with Mr. Mulroney to ask him whether he had made a commitment. I wrote him a letter about this, and I am waiting for his reply.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I may refer everyone to *Hansard* for September 22, where the Prime Minister says that no trace of any commitment was found. He knows perfectly well that to prove the existence of a commitment, one needs witnesses, and when the witness is one the parties, the case is clear. The letter dated December 15, 1993, which Mr. Bourassa sent to the Prime Minister, contains clear and irrefutable evidence of an agreement between Mr. Bourassa and Mr. Mulroney.

For the benefit of the Prime Minister, I will read an extract from this letter, in which Mr. Bourassa says: "The Chief Electoral Officer of Quebec has established that the direct cost of the referendum for the Government of Quebec as \$47.2