

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. McGrath:** Madam Speaker, the unity office in refusing to release the polls described one of them which was conducted by Goldfarb Consultants "as Canadians' attitudes towards, and expectations for, constitutional reform". That happens to conform with an ad which appeared in the *Financial Post* of October 11 sponsored by Goldfarb, and I quote:

In particular, the 1981 edition of The Goldfarb Report will include a detailed treatment of public attitudes towards the debate surrounding a new Canadian Constitution.

It would appear that what is available through Goldfarb for a fee is being scandalously denied this House. Has the minister satisfied himself that what he is denying the House is now available for a fee through a consultant which was commissioned in the first instance by this government?

● (1420)

**Mr. Chrétien:** Madam Speaker, I have checked exactly that point and the survey which has been made for the Canadian government will not be made available through the ads. I do think the one they are offering is the one that has been paid for and published, I guess, by the *Toronto Star*.

**Mr. McGrath:** Madam Speaker, I ask the minister, who is a good parliamentarian and is known to be fair, because of the differences that have arisen regarding this ad and the polls he is refusing to release to the House, will he agree to allow this matter to be referred to a committee of the House where it can be duly examined and the House can in fact satisfy itself in this regard?

**Mr. Chrétien:** Madam Speaker, I am following the rules of the House. I have tabled 13 surveys which have been taken in the last 18 months. I think they have been well received. Of course, I am not ready to release the three I mentioned earlier as yet. When it is possible I will be delighted to table them.

I do not see why we should refer the matter to a committee. We have given an answer to the House. Of 141 polls, 129 will be made public almost immediately.

GOLDFARB CONSULTANTS—REQUEST FOR GUARANTEE POLL INFORMATION NOT USED FOR COMMERCIAL GAIN

**Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West):** Madam Speaker, my question is supplementary to those directed to the minister. The answer he has given my colleague, the hon. member for St. John's East, indicates to me that he has absolutely no interest in the real spirit of freedom of information. Any important information the government has that may be at variance with the policies he is promoting is denied to us, and only that information which is in favour of government policies is released.

I would like to ask the minister a specific question. In view of the astoundingly similar content of the ad to the information that Goldfarb is selling and the material obtained from the poll which has been conducted by Goldfarb on behalf of the federal government, will the minister guarantee to this House that the government poll on the constitution and the

material obtained thereby has in no way been used by Goldfarb for its own commercial gain?

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development):** Madam Speaker, that is exactly the same assurance I gave the previous questioner, that the polls which have been conducted for the Government of Canada remain the property of the Canadian government and will not be used by this firm for other purposes.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Madam Speaker, I would ask the minister whether he will verify that the minister is using the provisions of section 14 of the proposed freedom of information act and the spirit of the matter before the House as the basis for withholding the poll in question; and would he agree that it would be more fair, in view of the fact he is following the spirit of the freedom of information law, that there be some opportunity for independent review of that poll or, indeed, a parliamentary reference to a committee so we can satisfy ourselves that the exclusion which he indicates he is now relying upon is in fact valid? Will he not put this matter out of dispute and allow some independent assessment as to what those polls really cover?

[Translation]

**Mr. Chrétien:** Madam Speaker, this week we tabled 129 polls taken in Canada over the last 18 months. I think the House will be satisfied since we made a very sincere effort to release the documents we had on hand. There would be a total of 12 only that cannot be made public at this time. We intend to respect the spirit of the legislation on information, and as soon as those documents will be of no more use to us for policy development purposes, we will release them.

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[English]

**GRAIN**

INQUIRY WHETHER EMBARGO ON SALES TO U.S.S.R. WILL BE LIFTED

**Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre):** Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport who speaks on grain matters in this House. In view of reports from the United States that Secretary of Agriculture Bergland is about to sign a new five-year agreement for grain sales to the Soviet Union, and as this once again shows the lack of commitment of the United States to its once heralded grain embargo, will the minister now state whether the Canadian government is prepared to call off the grain embargo and remove any restrictions to normal trade?

● (1425)

**Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport):** No, Madam Speaker. We will try to avoid replacing embargoes from the United States, but we will continue to ship to the U.S.S.R. at our normal and traditional levels.