

Oral Questions

federal government would comply with Quebec's referendum legislation as it did in 1980, which is not very reassuring, when we consider the contempt shown for this legislation by the Trudeau government and its Quebec lieutenant, the present Prime Minister of Canada, who spent millions of dollars and ignored the spending limits imposed on the "yes" and "no" umbrella committees.

Are we to conclude from yesterday's statements by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs that in 1995, the federal Liberals, like Trudeau did in 1980, intend to ignore the letter and the intent of Quebec's referendum legislation, which sets democratic rules for all such campaigns in Quebec?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I made it very clear that we complied with the legislation in 1980 and intend to comply with the letter and the intent of the legislation in 1995.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the following figures will illustrate the extent of this compliance. In 1980, the federal government spent at least \$17 million, although the spending ceiling for umbrella committees was set at \$2.7 million. It was slightly out of line here. And according to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the federal government intends to repeat this exercise during the next referendum campaign.

Should we conclude that the Trudeau government's behaviour during the 1980 campaign was a model of good faith and transparency, which the present federal government intends to follow during the next referendum campaign in Quebec?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of compliance, I may remind the members of the opposition that they made a promise there would be a referendum, and they should keep that promise.

They promised it would be held in the first half of 1995, in May or June, but they did not keep their promise. Now they promise it will be in the fall. I hope that promise will be kept.

When I look at the money their big brother, the Parti Québécois, spends on regional commissions to sell sovereignty, I think they should show some respect for the democratic system in the province and for the spirit of the law, in addition to making people abide by this legislation, which in fact we do.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we said it would be in 1995. For the minister's information, there are twelve months in 1995, and the year ends on December 31.

Speaking of big brothers, what about those subsidies to big brother, to Power Corporation, the real big brother of the Liberal Party?

While the Government of Quebec acts openly, the federal government acts behind the scenes by handing out subsidies that are directly related to the referendum campaign. A few examples: \$35 million for tourism advertising, in addition to the \$15 million already budgeted; \$6 million for the unity operation; \$1.1 million to celebrate the 30th birthday of the Canadian flag; \$2.2 million for the Charles Bronfman Foundation, friends of the government. This plus the other hidden costs.

Is that what the federal government means by complying with the spirit of Quebec's referendum legislation?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that we on this side will refrain from mentioning the advertising in the Montreal subway, the Commission on Quebec's sovereignty and the regional commissions.

• (1120)

We will refrain, because we already abide by the law and intend to comply with the spirit of the referendum legislation. However, what this country needs is for the referendum to be held as soon as possible, with a clear question, so that we will be able to deal with this problem once and for all and can start dealing with the real issues: creating jobs in Canada, including Quebec, and reducing poverty in Canada and Quebec.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. The federal government gave \$32 million to the Council for Canadian Unity last year for its prereferendum campaign and the government has pledged funding again for the coming year. In addition, the Department of National Revenue has granted it charitable status, and its number is 0333054-59.

Can the minister explain to us how the Council for Canadian Unity can be considered a charity?

[English]

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have explained to the House a number of times how the charitable status for organizations is given out. It is given out on the basis of court decisions. There is no legislation. It is not decision of the minister but a series of court decisions which has determined that various areas of activity