

Supply

damn good average compared with his Government's, which is about one-twentieth, or about 5 per cent.

● (1650)

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I am heartened to note the Hon. Member's faith and belief in the writings of the media. Apparently he agrees with the view of the media. Therefore, I look forward to his challenge to the Leader of his Party, that is if he supports the view of the media and I look forward as well to his admonition to his Leader to release the letter he and his predecessor exchanged which, as the media has suggested, is most proper.

Mr. Gauthier: The election is over.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: It is a new Liberal Party.

Mr. Andre: Oh, I see, this is a new Liberal Party.

I would only reiterate to the Hon. Member that he should take the facts. There have been suggestions all afternoon that factual information about government activities should be transmitted, and everyone agrees. Will he please take this factual statement of fact. The guidelines state quite specifically that this Government views communications with the public as very important and that the Government has instructed the officials to put in place the mechanism to communicate with the public, not just here in Ottawa, but across the entire country, so that the people in the so-called regions of the country can have the same access to information and can be communicated with in the same way as people in this nice little cocoon in Ottawa.

As I indicated earlier, the reality is that the Opposition is beating to death a straw man with no substance, no soul and no reality. In fact, the real substance of the situation is a government committed to openness and communication with the Canadian public.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): One short and succinct question, with a short and succinct answer. The Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy).

Mr. Cassidy: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister a factual question. I would remind him that a member of the Public Service was rapped over the knuckles for giving an answer to a certain question. The question was, "Does the Prime Minister have a nanny on the payroll?" If he will recall, the reason the public servant was rapped over the knuckles was that the answer was no, that he had someone who was a maid and who helped out with the kids. Is the question, "Does the Prime Minister have a nanny on the payroll?" a factual question? Could the Minister indicate to the House what is a factual question?

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I thought we were talking about factual information. I do not know what is a factual question. I cannot get my head around that. However, I know about the communication of facts. The facts the Hon. Member was alluding to were communicated by the Prime Minister's press secretary. So if he can read, he knows the answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time for questions and comments is now terminated. I will recognize the Hon. Member for Beauce (Mr. Bernier).

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, I was not going to speak in this debate, but in view of the irresponsible attitude taken by the Liberal Opposition and especially the article by Jeffrey Simpson published in the *Globe and Mail* this morning, "The door stays shut", I think I have a duty to take the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about the communications guidelines. I must say that since it was elected on September 4 of this year, this Government has been acting very wisely, considering the economic shambles we inherited from the previous Government.

Mr. Speaker, there has been far too much "laissez-allen", and that is why corrective action is necessary and why Canadians have endorsed such action, as expressed in the policies announced by the Conservative Government.

At my riding offices, Mr. Speaker, and everywhere else in Quebec and Canada, constituents favour the measures adopted by this Government. When we came to power we said we would clean up the mess, and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister said during the election campaign that the deficit would be over \$30 billion, the Government at the time said he was wrong. Now we know that the Prime Minister was right. When he asked for papers on the economy, the then Government steadfastly refused to provide them. The Leader of the Liberal Party kept saying: No, sir, you are wrong. The facts were different, however. One might say that our predictions were substantially accurate. This Government must now find an acceptable way to deal with the situation. Why were public servants not allowed to provide this information last summer? Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that perhaps they were afraid to release for public consumption information which would have put many people to shame. Perhaps they were hesitant under the previous government, hiding behind the smokescreen of confidentiality or for any other motive, hesitant to come clean with the people. They did not want the people to know anything about the administration of public funds.

People who have been in office in the past know very well that the government had full discretion when it came to releasing information. In that context, unfortunately, all information which Canadians rightfully expected to have to be able to pass their own judgement on the administration was practically unavailable or, at best, diluted. The government did not reveal more than it wanted the people to know. Had the people of this country been kept well informed, it is a safe bet that the Liberal government would have been thrown out a long time ago. Now that we have come up with communication guide-