

Supply

federal government advertising should be to sell federal policies, to overcome opposition from Members of Parliament, to overcome a hostile media and to ensure that there is public acceptance of the good works of the government and that public funds will be coerced from the taxpayers of Canada to pay for this. What does this say about the morality of the government in federal advertising? What does it say about the claim that this federal advertising is not designed to promote one political party?

But even if one sets aside for a minute the issue of whether the federal government should be advertising to promote the views of one partisan political party, there comes the question of truth in advertising. At the time those Department of Energy, Mines and Resources ads began showing up in our media, Mr. Murray Coolican of the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee wrote to the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs to ask for an investigation into false and misleading claims made in those ads. He felt that much of the content of that advertising was simply untrue and, because the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs goes to great pains to police the private sector and can lay charges against any corporation involved in false and misleading advertising, Mr. Coolican wrote under the Combines Investigation Act to the director of investigation and research of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and, on September 10, 1980, Mr. K. G. Decker, director of the marketing practices branch, wrote back to Mr. Coolican in this way:

As you know, a necessary element of an offence under Section 36 of the act is that a misrepresentation must have been made for the purposes of promoting the sale of a product or a business interest. Since the advertisement was placed by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources it is in my opinion, unlikely that a court of criminal law would consider that this element would be present. In addition, there have been some cases in law which appear to have established that agents of the Crown, which would include most government departments, cannot be prosecuted.

There are two standards when it comes to the truth. There is one standard for the private sector. Criminal charges can be laid against a corporation engaged in false and misleading advertising, and these charges are laid regularly by the federal government. However, there is complete carte blanche and freedom for the federal government to advertise however it sees fit, and there is no check upon it whatsoever. When Mr. Coolican wrote to the federal government he was told, "Well, you see, we cannot police this because the Crown is exempt from standards of truth in advertising."

Let me discuss another aspect of federal government activities. The Canadian Unity Information Office is fast becoming the tax-funded propaganda arm of the Liberal Party. At the time the Clark government left office there was a budget for the CUIO to fight the Quebec referendum. If hon. members want to check the main estimates for that year they will find that the budget was \$10.6 million. The referendum is over, yet last year the budget for CUIO was \$32 million, or roughly three times what it was when the Clark government left office and roughly three times the budget for Information Canada at its peak. You will remember, Mr. Speaker, the concern that Canadians expressed about Information Canada.

• (1530)

CUIO is engaged in massive tax-funded advertising campaigns which are designed to promote the image of the Liberal Party. In addition, it commissions polls in the private sector, the results of which are made available only to the Liberal Party and the Liberal government, not to the people of Canada. Quite recently a great deal of publicity attended the leak of a poll in Quebec which indicated that since the last Quebec election, the Lévesque government had fallen dramatically in public esteem. The reports were selective, however. The Liberal government gloated over the result of that poll but it did not mention other elements of it. Indeed, when I asked the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) to table the results of the poll in Parliament, he refused.

I have a copy of that poll, Mr. Speaker, and I think it would be useful for Members of Parliament to know what was contained in it. The poll found that people felt that in the ability of the two levels of government to deal with economic problems, there was more dissatisfaction than satisfaction. In the case of the Quebec government those polled indicated dissatisfaction over the satisfaction by two to one. In the case of the federal government, dissatisfaction over the handling of the economy was three times as high as satisfaction. That is the opinion of the people of Quebec according to a tax-funded federal government poll which is being withheld from the people of Canada and from the Parliament of Canada.

The poll found that the majority of people were unhappy with both governments. You will remember the publicity to the effect that the majority of Quebecers were dissatisfied with the Quebec government. It was pointed out that some 55 per cent of Quebec electors who responded indicated that they were unhappy with the Parti Québécois government while 39 per cent were happy with it. What the government neglected to mention to the Canadian people was that the poll showed that some 54 per cent were also unhappy with Ottawa; that is, 1 per cent less was unhappy with the Trudeau government than was unhappy with the Lévesque government and 1 per cent more was satisfied with the actions of the Trudeau government. But that information was withheld from us.

I invite members of the House to call the office of the Minister of Justice or CUIO to ask for a copy of this poll which was funded by tax dollars. No doubt they will receive the same response I did, which was that it was not available. It is secret. It is information that is to be made available for Liberal Party and Liberal government use but is to be withheld from Parliament and from the people of Canada.

Every single poll that was commissioned during the tenure of the Clark government has been made public. That was at the insistence and urging of my leader and members of that former government. Every poll commissioned during the tenure of the Clark government was on the understanding that the results would be made public. But the number of polls commissioned by the present government since the last election is secret. When I questioned the executive director of the Canadian Unity Information Office about this matter in December, he refused to tell a parliamentary committee how