

Supply

ment. It is a guideline closely related to the public interest because Canadians have the right and desire to know the advantages of the legislation and regulations. On the other hand, the guideline gives the cabinet and the ministers a peace of mind and confidence to work with their officials. Thus, Canada will be administered by a team that trusts its officials and a government that gives all the information needed on the benefits of the legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. The Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy).

Mr. Cassidy: Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the statements just made by the Minister of Communications. He is a Minister who must be impartially responsible for communications, but he has shown clearly that, as far as he is concerned, he wants all information provided by the government to be favourable to the government. He stated clearly that, in his opinion, the public must understand the consequences of the actions of the State, and he said that the information provided by the State must be favourable to the Conservative government and the Conservative Party.

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Communications: does he believe that factual information must be released by public servants to the public or to Hon. Members if that information is unfavourable to the government? Yes or no?

Mr. Masse: Mr. Speaker, one thing is clear, and that is that the Hon. Member did not understand the guidelines since he did not understand what I said.

I said clearly and simply that the responsibility of public servants is to inform the people about the reality of the law and regulations. I am talking about hard facts. I never did ask public servants—and there is no reference to that in the guidelines—to make a distinction between what might be favourable or unfavourable to the government.

The directive is clear and specific, and it has to do with facts and reality. We have never claimed that public servants should provide only the kind of information which is in the interest of the government, not anymore, I am sure, than my colleague would urge Canadian public employees to release only information detrimental to the government so as to serve the short-term interests of the New Democratic Party.

What we all want—and if my colleague is honest in this debate on information, what he would want to know and what he would want to see as a reality—is that Canadians be kept well informed about the facts. If that is what the Hon. Member is seeking, he ought to read the guidelines and apply them as do public servants, and the people will be well informed.

Mr. Cassidy: Mr. Speaker, could the Minister explain to us how it is that public service officials have refused to release the

results of the recent impact studies on jobs which have been carried out by the government? Why have officials of all departments refused to do that, and why have the government and ministers of the Crown also refused to release the results of these studies which assess the impact of these measures on employment in various regions of our country?

If you really believe that objective information must be made available to the public, so that Hon. Members and the Canadian people as a whole can make an informed judgment on the government's action, why is the government refusing to release this information and why are government officials also refusing to release it?

Mr. Masse: Mr. Speaker, is the Hon. Member seeking information to understand the scope of the legislation, or is he merely seeking information as an Hon. Member? I think that the guidelines are directed first and foremost to the Canadian public as a whole who has the right to know the scope of legislation and regulations.

● (1600)

If the Hon. Member is referring to background documents which are currently serving as the basis for the development of government policy, it is not yet government policy. Once it becomes government policy, there will be information papers which will advise Canadians as to the scope of the regulations and the benefit of the legislation. What we want, Mr. Speaker, is better public information on what the government is offering, not necessarily public confusion due to a host of conflicting documents originating from here and there and everywhere. What we want is to be able to work with our officials in an atmosphere of trust and serenity until legislation is passed and regulations authorized. From then on, we are dealing with "factual" facts which are known to the public, and we want the public to be well informed, because we feel that well informed people would return this party to power for a long, long time, since our legislation and regulations will benefit the Canadian public.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) on a question.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, the Minister referred to the importance of having a well-informed population. I would like to ask him a question concerning a very specific population, namely the employees of the CBC. If the Minister is sincere when he refers to the importance of having well-informed people, I would ask him why he did not enter into the required consultations before announcing the \$85 million cut, if I remember right, in the CBC budget? Why did the CBC employees have to learn about the details of those cuts in the newspapers? The Minister's duty in my view is to explain that to the House and to all Canadians. The question is, first, were there specific studies made on the impact on the CBC