

Mr. Fleming: Someone shouted "What about the billboard ads?" Those ads—which again reflect very much what I thought was the view of this House of Commons—

Mr. Clark: You thought?

Mr. Fleming:—that we needed constitutional reform—will expire on October 15.

Mr. McGrath: Madam Speaker, I am sorry to see the minister having to swallow himself whole without condiments.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McGrath: My question, very simply based on the reply which I have just received from the minister, is this: is he now giving this House an assurance, in keeping with the comments that he made last night on television, that there will be no more money spent on government advertising to promote the government's position on the bill that is now before the House? Is he giving the House that assurance?

An hon. Member: No.

Mr. Fleming: Madam Speaker, I will never assure the hon. member opposite that I will not attempt, as a member of the government, to communicate with the Canadian public something as important as the Canadian constitution.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

* * *

● (1425)

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

PUBLICLY FINANCED POLLS—REPORTED STATEMENT OF MINISTER

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I too have a question which pertains to information. I hope I have a little better response from the government than that which we just heard. Yesterday the Minister of Justice said that he would release publicly funded polls pertaining to federal-provincial relations only "when I don't need them any more", obviously expressing what seems to some of us a partisan concern.

Mr. Crosbie: Never!

Mr. Broadbent: Will the minister indicate if he feels that this statement, which he is quoted as having made yesterday, squares with the basic principle of having freedom of information legislation in the first place?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, I said that polls had always been taken for the development of government policies. We asked some questions during the referendum campaign, just like the former government did in December, to

ascertain public opinion and we used the same procedure during the referendum campaign. Other polls taken since then have been used to develop our policies. We intend to make them public when their usefulness for the development of government policies has been exhausted.

[English]

PUBLICLY FINANCED POLLS—INQUIRY AS TO HOW RESULTS COULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I will direct my supplementary to the Prime Minister since I asked him a question on the same subject yesterday. He indicated that he would be willing in principle to make information available, but suggested that sometimes such information, for example in the federal-provincial field, could be counterproductive. I wish to ask the Prime Minister how information gathered about the opinions of Canadians in the federal-provincial field, paid for by Canadians, would in any way be counter-productive to the public interest as opposed to the Liberal party interest if it were made public.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, it is well known, or at least suspected, that many democratic governments engage in polling systems to be informed of the opinions of their electorate. For example, I read a statement this morning to the effect that it happens in the province of Saskatchewan as well. Governments are interested in knowing and assessing between elections the opinions of those who constitute the basic sovereignty of the people. It is the government's job to govern. To govern, it uses this knowledge. If these polls were made public the moment they were gathered together, and if this were done on a universal basis by the NDP government in Saskatchewan and by all other governments in Canada, I think those governments would probably object to this kind of procedure because they are getting polls in order to determine the kind of action which is acceptable to the Canadian people. This is the basis on which they make their decisions.

Mr. Andre: Are you listening to what you are saying?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, I am not sure if the hon. member is listening.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Yes, we are, and we are shocked.

Mr. Trudeau: If the hon. member is shocked, I would point out to him that when he was sitting on the government benches, the government of which he was a member was also taking polls of public opinion. We inherited several of these polls.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Publish them.

Mr. Trudeau: They were not made public by his government.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Publish them.