

accessibility. These guidelines simply make sure that that will happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I shall now entertain questions or comments.

Mr. Robison: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the remarks of the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Andre). Apparently the minister has not read the letter with the former guidelines which was circulated. That letter was signed by the then Prime Minister, now Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark). That letter contains a couple of interesting paragraphs which are omitted in the letter signed by the present Prime Minister. I want to draw this to the attention of the Minister and then ask him a question. One paragraph reads as follows:

One of the things we can do is to encourage open and responsive behaviour among public servants in their day to day dealings with the public, including particularly Members of Parliament and representatives of the news media.

That paragraph is completely missing from the present Prime Minister's letter. Instead, we have directives to deputy ministers with veiled threats that their performance appraisals will be affected if they do not clear up their act. Second, referring to Ministers, we have the following:

It is for your decision which levels of public servants in your department are to be authorized to deal with the media. However, in the spirit of the guidelines, this list should be broad rather than narrow.

Nowhere in the present Prime Minister's letter is there any reference to broadening the number of public servants who will be accessible to Members of Parliament and the media. Instead, we have the creation of a primary spokesperson who will be some sort of media czar through whom all information will be channeled. The author of the 1979 letter and guidelines should be concerned about the extent to which they have been subverted.

I want to ask the Minister a specific question. I have before me a copy of the guidelines written by the former Prime Minister, now Secretary of State for External Affairs. I have the guidelines which were drawn up by Cabinet on Thursday of last week. In Kingston on August 12, when campaigning for office, the Prime Minister said, "Not since the last war have Canadians had a government so obsessed with secrecy as they have today".

Looking at the guidelines which are in effect today, comparing them with the guidelines which were in effect during the Liberal term in office, where in the new guidelines is there any indication whatsoever of an attitude of greater openness? The only change in these guidelines is to prohibit off the record conversations with Members of Parliament and with the media.

I agreed with the then Leader of the Opposition that what they have done is to impose a gag or muzzle. How can the Minister stand in his place and suggest they are more open when in fact they have taken a step backwards?

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Hon. Member to again read the opening sentence in the guidelines:

Supply

Communications with the public, including particularly Members of Parliament and news media representatives are a part of the duties and responsibilities of managers in the public service.

It is a declaration. It is part of their duty to communicate. In the letter it says:

In view of the Government's commitment to openness—

If that was not the Government's commitment, why in heaven's name would the Prime Minister write that in a letter to deputy ministers? Why would he write to deputy ministers of this Government's commitment to openness if it were his intention to do exactly the opposite? That is absurd. You are fabricating. You are beating the blazes out of some straw man that does not exist, a straw man of a secretive Prime Minister, of a secretive government, and you are pummeling the devil out of that straw man. He does not exist. Read the document, "This government's commitment to openness". It instructs officials not only to be prepared to communicate with people here in Ottawa, in our cosy little cocoon, but to communicate with people throughout the country so that they might know what we are doing. It instructs Departments to be open and to communicate with the rest of the country. Calling it secretive and imposing a gag is to be at least unfair, if not worse.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, the Minister seems to be living in some outside world. I remind him that it is not this Government, this Party, or this Opposition, but the media who are seeing you as being secretive. "It is secrecy time". "Paranoia stalks Parliament Hill". "Tories keep us in the dark". "The Great Stone Wall". "Finance Minister refuses to release information". There are headlines in the media every day. You should read *The Globe and Mail*.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Will the Hon. Member address the Chair, please.

Mr. Gauthier: In an article in last week's *Globe and Mail*, Patrick Martin stated as his fourth rule for the Tory dynasty, and I quote:

Centralize the message. "If this Government is going to centrally run anything, it's the media," admitted one senior Mulroney adviser on the condition that he not be identified.

This was an off-the-cuff remark.

"Its going to be managed," he said, referring to the message that the Government will allow the press to record.

The Mulroney administration has already become known for this. Ministers have been muzzled—

This Minister has the gall to say that he is part of an open government. It is perceived in the real world as being one of the most closed keyhole administrations we have ever had in this country. On top of that, he has the gall to come here today and say to the House that the former government did not answer questions on the Order Paper, when the record will show that 85 per cent of the questions were answered. But his own administration, out of 100 questions, has answered only four. Only four questions have been answered in three and a half weeks. Who is withholding information? The Government is. I beg to say to the Hon. Member, that 85 per cent is a