

Business of the House

preparing its argument for Parliament and the committee, has access to public opinion polls about how Canadians think their country should be organized. We do not have access to those polls and we do not have access to those funds as opposition members.

We are all elected as equals, and until a law is passed in Parliament, until public servants have been told what to do by Parliament, then I maintain that, as Mr. Speaker Jerome ruled, for any parliamentary activity, access to the funds should apply equally to members on both sides of the Chair, equally across the floor of this House.

I would like to ask you to take a serious look at that and the intent, because the Speaker said, as it appears in *Hansard* of that date, that before we enter into a practice of this sort again it should be given very serious consideration. He said the House ought to be consulted. I think we would be very wise if we were to refer this matter of polls, the matter of government advertising on proposals that are not the law of the land, have not been enacted, and where public servants do not have the direction of the Parliament of Canada, to a special committee. I think this is a question that strikes possibly at the very essence of the democratic system, of freedom, of equality of votes in this country, be they cast by members of Parliament on the government or on the opposition side of the House.

[Translation]

Madam Speaker: With leave from hon. members, I would now interrupt debate on the point of privilege raised this afternoon. I would not like to anticipate on the two decisions I will give tomorrow, because they are very close to this one, and I submit to hon. members that evidence of this lies in the arguments heard in the House this afternoon. They are almost identical with those raised on the two points of privilege I have taken under consideration and on which I will rule tomorrow.

On the point raised today, I have not been satisfied up till now—although I reserve decision on this—as to what information in the studies, surveys or submission from Goldfarb Consultants is not included in the studies the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development (Mr. Chrétien) decided to make available to hon. members by a procedure he chose himself and that may not please all hon. members. I have no authority whatsoever to force the minister to table documents in this House. He selected a procedure, a way of his own to make available studies that in my view are very bulky. That is his business, and if hon. members are not satisfied with the way the minister made these documents available, they of course will have opportunities to debate this some way or other.

Therefore I reserve judgment on this point of privilege. I will render tomorrow the two decisions I took under consideration and also my ruling on today's point of privilege. I am not saying that they are all identical, not at all. They concern slightly different aspects. They are not identical, but they are similar enough, they are based on the same matter, and I shall rule tomorrow on all three.

[English]

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order and I must confess to you that it relates to the matter you have just reserved upon and, therefore, have not decided upon. This is something I feel should be brought to your attention. I raise it because of answers to questions in respect of this whole matter of polling. If you had not reserved decision I would not be raising this matter, because I do have respect for the Chair, and I think you understand that.

● (1540)

What I am concerned about is that in answer to a question put yesterday, as reported at page 3685 of *Hansard*—the question having to do with the tabling of the results of the polls—the minister decided that he would not table those results. He can make that decision. I will ask my friend the government House leader a little later about that, but he can make that decision. I will tell you, Madam Speaker, as a matter of record, that he is adopting a process by which the poll results can be obtained. The raw figures and the questions asked can be obtained.

Mr. Pinard: That is not a point of order, Walter.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): We know that there was a detailed analysis of those polls. That detailed analysis is not being released. It is the analysis which is referred to in the Goldfarb ad.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I thank the hon. member for bringing this fact to my attention. I think I referred to it when I was telling the House that I was reserving my decision on this question of privilege. I did say that perhaps hon. members are not satisfied with the mechanism the minister chose to make these studies or polls available—

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): That was not the point.

Madam Speaker: —to the members of this House, but that is the mechanism he chose. If hon. members want to discuss that on some other occasion or while raising some other point, I can entertain it, but since I said I am going to reserve on this question of privilege the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) really has been relating his remarks to that question of privilege. In any event, I have heard him, but I will not entertain any other interventions on this particular question of privilege.

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WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if the government House leader could tell us his plans for the end of this week and into next week.