

**Senator Asselin:** Do you deny it?

**Senator Perrault:** Honourable senators, I will give the commitment that the question will be taken as notice, and efforts will be made to obtain as much accurate information as possible.

• (1415)

**Hon. Lowell Murray:** Honourable senators, in view of the fact this is the second time in recent years that the Auditor General has found that the government has grossly overstated its assets, I should like to ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate whether he will consult with the Minister of Justice and the law officers of the Crown and advise us as to what penalties would be levelled against the directors of a company in the private sector for grossly overstating their assets and understating their liabilities for public consumption. Can he tell us whether such directors in the private sector would have to go to jail for such an offence?

**Senator Perrault:** I may be mistaken and it may be unfair of me to suggest this, but do I sense a political orientation to that question directed to this side by the official opposition?

**Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition):** Never from Senator Murray!

**Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development):** What was your statement when you were in office? Exactly the same!

[Translation]

## THE CONSTITUTION

### PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

**Hon. Martial Asselin:** On a different subject, I should also like to direct a question to the Leader of the Government in the Senate. The minister who seems to be responsible for federal-provincial relations with Quebec, the Honourable Serge Joyal, announced yesterday with considerable emphasis that the federal government was ready to spend \$2 million or more on advertising or progaganda in Quebec, to promote the new constitutional document that is to be tabled in Parliament this afternoon. Considering the appalling state of the economy in Quebec, at a time when we see large numbers of factories closing down and as many companies going bankrupt, would it not be preferable, for the time being, to spend this \$2 million on the private sector in the form of grants to create jobs, instead of throwing this money out the window just to tell Quebecers that the federal government is right and the provincial government is wrong?

[English]

**Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government):** First of all, honourable senators, with respect to assisting private enterprise and small businesses in this country, let me say that no government in the history of this nation has been more generous or more forthcoming in its investment policies. If the Honourable Senator Asselin commits himself to read to this chamber all of the grants which have been made to

deserving companies in the province of Quebec to assist employment and economic growth, that list will be provided to him, but only on condition that he share that information and knowledge with every member of the chamber.

Secondly, with respect to the information program contemplated for the province of Quebec, we do not regard that as an expenditure but as an investment in public enlightenment for the benefit of Quebec and for the benefit of Canada and for national unity.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Senator Perrault:** Surely Senator Asselin is not suggesting that what many Canadians consider to be the irresponsible and divisive accusations being made now by the Premier of Quebec and some of his colleagues, distributed, I understand, to every home in the province of Quebec and throughout the media, should go unanswered? Surely he is not suggesting that there should be no reply by the Government of Canada?

[Translation]

**Senator Asselin:** Once again, the Leader of the Government has not answered my question. I asked him the question in view of the appalling state of the economy in Quebec. I could invite my colleague to come and visit Quebec if he really wants to see what the economic situation is like, when twenty service stations had to close recently because the owners could not meet their payments as a result of the high interest rates set by the federal government and the Bank of Canada. I therefore ask the Leader of the Government whether there is not a better case for investing this money to create jobs instead of wasting it on partisan advertising for the federal government.

[English]

**Senator Perrault:** First, we do not intend to cancel the program; and, secondly, one of the best ways in which to encourage economic expansion in the province of Quebec would be to re-establish the spirit of confidence in the economy of that province which many believe has been adversely affected by the present provincial government.

**Hon. Hazen Argue (Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board):** Well done.

• (1420)

**Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition):** Is the Leader of the Government suggesting that by speaking in the manner in which he has just spoken he is helping the situation with regard to the resolution on the Constitution?

**Senator Perrault:** Honourable senators, I am suggesting that there comes a point in time when some facts must be placed on the table, because the future of this nation is of critical importance.

**Senator Flynn:** Honourable senators, I do not believe that the timing of the Leader of the Government coincides with the timing indicated by Mr. Joyal yesterday.