

Point of Order—Mr. Prud'homme

process of petitions I have been involved in, such as the use of metric in auction markets, the petition was thumb-tacked to a bulletin board. I noted that with some frequency people would write Mr. and Mrs. and then the name, perhaps including children's names, all done in one pen and one hand. I think it is one thing to find a person is fabricating names, if that is the contention, but it should be noted that there is sometimes a duplication of names simply because of the close relationship of the people involved who are of the same opinion. They are separate, and I would not want them to be categorized in such a way as to say that one person cannot sign for his spouse or siblings.

Mr. Pinard: Each case would be looked at on its merits.

● (1550)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): At this point, I would ordinarily recognize the Hon. Member for Comox-Powell River (Mr. Skelly) because of the number of occasions on which he has risen. However, I am not sure whether he is rising on a point of order or whether he is rising on petitions.

Mr. Skelly: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): In that case, the Chair will now recognize that Hon. Member on that point of order.

There are a great many other Members who are rising on points of order. I leave it to each individual Hon. Member to decide whether the subject has been aired sufficiently or whether they wish to continue this particular point of order.

Mr. Skelly: Mr. Speaker, I think it is time to lay this question to rest. The petition sheet, on which this issue was called into question, contains some 30 additional pages of a petition that was circulated in the newspapers and mailed back. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, these are tabled—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. I do want to try to contain the debate on this point of order. The Hon. Member for Saint-Denis did not raise an objection, and he specifically so indicated, against any one particular petition.

Mr. Skelly: Then, Mr. Speaker, he does not have a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): In that case, I think it is out of order to refer to an argument on any one given petition.

Mr. Skelly: Mr. Speaker, do we really have a point of order before us? The Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) stood up in the House and gave notice of an admonition to the House, but he did not in fact in my opinion raise a valid point of order.

An Hon. Member: It was a broad brush smear.

Mr. Skelly: It was not a broad brush smear. He certainly expressed some concerns, but I am not certain that those concerns might exist other than his indicating that he had some evidence that he might wish to raise on Monday. I do not

think, Mr. Speaker, that we do have a point of order before us until the Hon. Member makes some kind of a specific accusation in the House. I think you should dispense with it, Mr. Speaker, and move on. I think that your original thoughts on this matter were probably the best for the direction of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I thank the Hon. Member for the compliment but I cannot refuse to see another Hon. Member on a point of order.

Mr. Thacker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the point of order raised by the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme). I think it is appropriate to note that the vast majority of petitions are from people in western Canada. That is no accident because it flows out of what so many people in western Canada do say in response to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Axworthy). It is when the House is sitting that the West is being oppressed and attacked, whether it is by the National Energy Program, the Crow—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The Hon. Member is entering into debate. A small voice in my ear indicated that I ought to correct myself about not being able to refuse to recognize Hon. Members on points of order. Of course it is possible that at some point the Chair may have to declare that there is an end to hearing points of order.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make two comments with respect to petitions. First, if anyone decided to write a petition and one person signed it on behalf of many others, that would be a complete fraud.

The second point I wish to make is that I see some petitions signed in front of me, but hundreds and thousands of them come through the mail. There is no way that I can swear an affidavit that any one particular person signed that petition. However, I have to give some credence to the credibility of the people of the country. They are not illiterate. They will not sign a petition unless they believe in what it calls for. It is an ancient right of the people to present a petition to their Parliament through their representatives. I do not think Hon. Members of the House should be questioning that right to sign a petition.

Thousands of these people have signed these petitions. They are very concerned. They are so concerned that they sign petitions and send them to their Members, many times even putting stamps on the letters. I think we should accept these petitions for what they are, and I wish the Government would realize that these petitions mean something. The Government should try to reflect the thinking of the people, as indicated by these petitions.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I think a very important point was raised by the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme), and although it did not deal with a petition that I had tabled, I did go with him to look at the prima facie evidence that he alluded to in his point of order.