

Indian Affairs

An Hon. Member: You are not.

Mr. Boudria: I am not a lawyer. I have been told by learned parliamentarians not to apologize for not being a lawyer.

Mr. Nunziata: Now, now. Don't go too far.

Mr. Boudria: But that is not the point. Most Canadians know, as I do, that we are all presumed innocent until proven otherwise. I am sure all the people named today in the House have that same presumption of innocence. To use the pretext of having presented a motion for the production of documents, documents the Hon. Member knew or should have known were going to be tabled anyway, to make these accusations, in my view, is wrong.

I could think of other words to describe it, but in keeping with our parliamentary traditions, I shall not. However, I will continue to think them anyway, knowing that if I were to make any remark which would be more severe, you, Mr. Speaker, being the diligent Speaker you are, would not tolerate it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that our privileges as Members should be used in a responsible manner by each and everyone of us. There are a number of Members who on occasion have been accused of using their privileges for certain ends, and the Hon. Member opposite, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister who just tabled—

Mr. Hudon: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for External Relations (Mr. Hudon).

Mr. Hudon: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member opposite has incredible nerve and ought to mention the 10 times or so he used the same privileges to make all kinds of accusations he was afraid to make in the lobby of the House.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): This is debate. The Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) has the floor.

Mr. Boudria: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nunziata: On the same point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I just ruled that it was not a point of order.

Mr. Nunziata: On another point of order.

Some Hon Members: Sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member for York South-Weston (Mr. Nunziata) on another point of order.

Mr. Nunziata: In stating his point of order, the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary imputed motive to my colleague—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Just a moment. I just ruled that that was not a point of order. The Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Boudria: Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, in the few seconds I have left I should like to tell the Parliamentary Secretary, badly informed as he usually is, that he should not say I raised the question of privilege about ten times, for you, Mr. Speaker, know full well that I rose twice on a question of privilege since I was elected in 1984. Only twice: once this week, and the first time about a year ago. But I will not say anything more about this because the Parliamentary Secretary probably does not know any better. But the fact remains, Mr. Speaker, that if he does not know anything about these matters he should at least know what is going on in his own department, and before the debate began on the motion this afternoon he should have warned his colleague that these documents would be tabled, thus avoiding accusations which should never have been made and heard in the House. I urge other Members to give their views on the motion under consideration this afternoon.

[*English*]

Mr. Fred King (Okanagan—Similkameen): Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day, indeed, for the democratic process in Canada when a debate such as this must be undertaken. It should be totally unnecessary, considering the known background of the underlying issues, the amount of time and effort which has been put into seeking a resolution to the base causes of the problems and considering the fact that there is in effect a freedom of information law. Nevertheless, we are here and we are raising the matter before Parliament because we simply do not accept that we as parliamentarians should allow ourselves to be shut out of the information to which we legitimately claim and have demanded access for more than four or five years. Nor do we believe that a bureaucratic system should be able to thwart the efforts of elected Members of Parliament to bring about a measure of justice and relief to a group of persons whose wellbeing is being put in jeopardy by the failure of the system to fulfil its obligations to citizens with whom it has entered into a binding contract.