

Point of Order—Mr. Epp

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief, I assure you, but I want to deal with the matter raised by my House Leader, the Hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), with respect to the completeness of the record.

Mr. Evans: That is a different point of order.

Mr. Speaker: If the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Evans) has a point of order—we are hearing a discussion on a point of order; presumably every Member is speaking to a point of order—the Chair will immediately recognize the Parliamentary Secretary after the intervention of the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn).

Mr. Evans: On a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: We are on a point of order, and it is difficult—

Mr. Evans: Nobody has the floor.

Miss MacDonald: Because you interrupted, that is why.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair has recognized the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West and will subsequently recognize the Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr. Evans: Is it the same point of order?

Miss MacDonald: Yes.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I want to carry on with respect to the matter that has been raised by my colleagues who have made the point, I think validly, that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) has exceeded his authority as a Member of Parliament and as a member of the Treasury benches by tabling correspondence between his Department and officials of his Department and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Mulroney) when he was a private citizen. The Minister, though, took it upon himself to try to deflect a question with respect to the Minister's upcoming Budget by using this tactic of making reference to private correspondence which took place, as I mentioned, and making some very serious allegations with respect to the Leader of the Opposition that he spoke only on behalf of wealthy Canadians and for his own personal benefit at the expense of the poor.

Having flouted the rules of the House by referring to private correspondence, the Minister decided to go one step further by tabling that correspondence in the House. As it turns out, the Minister's officials were unable to find the document in question, so that this smoking gun to which the Minister so gleefully referred in his outburst of last week—that is all I can categorize it as, an outburst—came up empty. He came in with a variety of correspondence which dealt with such innocent matters as a plea to halt policy changes which had the effect of undermining retirement allowances for private sector employees.

My colleagues have also touched upon the fact that an accusation once made does not easily fade. What concerns me

in this process is that although the Minister was able to stand in his place and lay documents of a private nature on the table of the House of Commons, thus laying a charge and defining the issue by selecting the documents that were to be tabled in the House, the Leader of the Opposition has no device or method under our rules, except by order of Your Honour and by precedent which is not available to him, to respond. I think this is of some importance for this reason: A case can be swayed as easily by information that is left hidden as by that which is uncovered. For example, what is to prevent the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan) from revealing, disclosing or tabling selective documents which tend to impugn the integrity of a Member of the House of Commons or indeed of any citizen of the country which has been received by him or by the security service of the country? That is not a situation where there is any obligation to provide information to that particular Minister. The Minister defends himself by making reference to the fact that providing income tax information is obligatory by law to the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Bussières). There are constraints with respect to the tabling of documents on that Minister.

Throughout the exchange which took place last week, the Minister was referring in every instance to a single, solitary document, a letter to which he apparently referred as being received that would tend to be proof of the allegation he was making against the personal integrity of the Leader of the Opposition.

At page 693 of *Hansard* for January 24, the Minister is recorded as saying that the intervention made by the Leader of the Opposition would have greater validity and credibility if, and I quote, "the Hon. Member had made representations other than the one I obtained from him when he was in private business . . .". At page 694 the Minister is recorded as having said the following:

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition says that I distorted the truth. If that is his argument, will he let me release the letter he sent to my officials at that time on this particular subject?

Finally, the House Leader for the New Democratic Party supported, for what reason I know not, the Minister of Finances asking that these private documents be tabled on the floor of the House of Commons.

Mr. Nielsen: Document, singular.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: In fact he asked that they be tabled, which I find rather peculiar for a Party which supposedly stands for the integrity of individual citizens as opposed to the state. In response to the request of the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans), that documents submitted to the Minister of Finance by the Leader of the Opposition be tabled, the Minister is on record at page 700 of *Hansard* as having said:

—the letter was not sent to me but to my officials. It was sent to the Department and I have had an indication from the Leader of the Opposition that he is agreeable to the release of the letter. I will be very happy to table it as soon as possible.