

River (Mr. Skelly), to deliver a blatantly political message by way of a mass mailing on the B.C. election campaign solely for political gain.

The letter in part states:

We are asking you to join with us in getting to work to elect the next provincial New Democrat government. Phone your local campaign headquarters and get involved now.

Mr. Speaker, I consider this to be an abuse of my privileges and my station as a Member of Parliament, both in terms of the proper application and use of stationery and the frank. If you look at *Hansard* for December 15, 1982, you will find that the position taken by the then Member for The Battlefords-Meadow Lake, Mr. Anguish, described the position of the NDP then, as opposed to the position of the NDP now.

I ask that you rule in favour of this matter.

Mr. Ted Schellenberg (Nanaimo—Alberni): Further to the comments of my hon. colleague from Kootenay West (Mr. Briscoe), I would ask that this matter be referred to the appropriate committee, perhaps the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure, and request unanimous consent of this House that this letter be tabled with the House. This a blatant abuse of parliamentary privilege for political gain by the Members from Skeena (Mr. Fulton), New Westminster—Coquitlam (Ms. Jewett), Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands (Mr. Manly), Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell), Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis), Burnaby (Mr. Robinson), Comox—Powell River (Mr. Skelly) and Vancouver—Kingsway (Mr. Waddell).

We all know that during election campaigns we are representing particular political Parties. Once we become Members of Parliament we represent all of our constituents, no matter what their political stripe. This kind of abuse must be stopped.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, if you are about to hand down a ruling on the point that was just raised, perhaps I may contribute to the debate and point out that the privilege all Members have to send mail free of charge is a privilege they have under the Post Office Act and not under a Standing Order of this House. I think there is a very real danger here. How Hon. Members make use of the privilege they are granted under the Post Office Act is starting to be the subject of decisions made here in the House. This may lead to a situation where we have Members commenting on the contents of mail sent by other Members. I think the danger lies in the fact that the Chair is getting involved in ruling on the contents of sealed first-class envelopes sent to Canadians across Canada. It is the principle of the thing that bothers me. I am not saying that I support the manoeuvre of our NDP Members, but I do maintain it is not up to the Chair to start ruling on the contents of first class mail sent by Members pursuant to the Post Office Act.

Privilege—Mr. Brisco

[English]

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to make my remarks on this issue. Every time there is an election across this country, whether it is federal or provincial, by-elections, or the referendum in Quebec, the same type of issue is raised either in the House, in a letter to the Speaker, or a letter that is sent to the appropriate committee of the House. We can all find examples of that happening and I do not think it is anything new.

Mr. Mazankowski: Blatant abuse.

Mr. Murphy: If you want to go into examples, I have a householder put out by the Minister of International Affairs with the Premier of B.C. which was sent out during the B.C. election. Obviously, that would be another example of people interfering or getting involved in the provincial elections. We all have examples.

What I am saying, and I think it is an important issue, is that yes, people do always have some political bias in their householders or their mailings. That is a well-known fact. By the rules of the House it is up to the Member to take responsibility for what he or she mails. Of course, the constituents who always have the wisdom know the source of the information, know what is going on and make the ultimate decision as to whether or not they deem it appropriate.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I would like the record to show that whether the Speaker finds this an abuse of Members' privileges remains to be seen. It certainly is an abuse of the taxpayers' privileges. How the NDP in such a sanctimonious fashion can stand up and say it is all right for them to flog their Party in the B.C. provincial election is outrageous and disgraceful.

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, this whole question of the use of our franking privileges under the Canada Post Corporation Act has got to be looked into by the House. What happens is that people take a look at us as Members and say that we are abusing our franking privileges for reasons for which they were not given in the first place. I think that the matter goes deeper than the British Columbia election and the clear abuse there. I say it is "clear abuse", but Members from the New Democratic Party may say, for partisan reasons or whatever, that it is not. In any event, whether it is this particular alleged abuse or some other alleged abuse, this question of the franking privileges and the use of franking privileges by Members is surely an interest that goes to the concept of Members and the concept of the privilege of Members generally.

• (1120)

It reflects upon us as Members whether we are honestly conducting our business as far as the public is concerned or whether we are taking advantage of our position as Members to feather our political nest, so to speak. Whether or not it is this issue, this matter ought to be referred to the Standing