

people to have access to that information on an informal basis? That is an incredible situation.

Mr. McRae: You won't let us.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Now members on the government side want to curtail our ability to speak up on a matter of privilege, and I resent that very much because I have a right, as much as any other member, including the hon. member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, to stand here and question the integrity of the actions of the government and to ask Your Honour to look at the rights and privileges of your fellow Members of Parliament in the carrying out of their functions and duties.

Publication means a number of things. It means that perceptions and points of view are put across through briefings by departmental officials in properly carrying out their functions, but this tends to diminish the ability of the individual Member of Parliament to debate on the floor of the House. I think that is exactly the point Your Honour was asking about. How are the rights of the individual Member of Parliament affected by this action? I simply submit that my ability to deal properly with the spending estimates has been severely diminished by the premature and haphazard publication of regional reviews of what particular rights and benefits will accrue or what obligations will accrue to particular areas of this country. That is where the member of Parliament is affected. This is not a hypothetical discussion or an academic discussion. This is a discussion about the rights of the hon. member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, the hon. member for Saskatoon West, the hon. member for York-Peel and the hon. member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington) to carry out their responsibilities properly.

Today we still have not had this matter before us, and yet it has been published, or extracts of it have been published across the country.

I will conclude simply by making those two points. One is that there is no question that, by virtue of the fact that the government publishes before it tables, it is in breach of the traditional rules of the House of Commons and Parliament and of the privileges of each and every Member of Parliament. Second, by delivering this information and allowing it on whatever basis, accidentally or by design—I make no distinction here because I do not know what went through the mind of the President of the Treasury Board in this connection—and publishing this information widely before members of the House of Commons are officially in receipt of the information, the government severely diminishes our ability to assess properly and discuss the estimates which are apparently to be tabled in the House.

Mr. Paul E. McRae (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Madam Speaker, I do not recall any time in this House when I have been as angry as I have been in the last 24 hours. My anger results from the fact that my rights in this Parliament have been abridged.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Hear, hear!

Privilege—Mr. W. Baker

Mr. McRae: I listened all yesterday afternoon to an absolute filibuster on the part of the opposition so that the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) could not get the floor. Then hon. members opposite had the unmitigated gall to say we were in some way responsible for not getting the estimates tabled. I will say it again; I have never been as angry in this House as I am now. Many situations like this have developed. I remember that on February 6, the hon. member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens) came in here and gave notice of a spurious question of privilege. I have seen no record indicating that he raised it the next week. He used about ten minutes of the time of the House just to do that. I was prevented from giving a full speech, which I had intended to give. It is hypocrisy for the Tory party, the official opposition in the House, to say that we are in any way, responsible for that document not being delivered. That is something I cannot accept.

● (1550)

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, I rise on the point of privilege which is now being discussed. I will not be lengthy because I do not want to increase the anger of the hon. member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan (Mr. McRae). Even his anger must give way to the privileges of members of this House. It is easy to understand why he has not often been angry in this House. It is because he has not often been in the opposition and been subjected to the contemptible treatment the opposition receives from members of the government.

What I want to refer to first is that we are discussing not only the conduct of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) on this question of privilege but we are also discussing the conduct of the government House leader, who was the one who actually compounded the contempt of Parliament and the breach of privilege by authorizing at 6.40 p.m. last night that the public information on the estimates should be released. He can deny this, of course. If he does deny it, then I will believe him. But I would like to cite one article from the *Gazette* of February 26. The article reads in part:

Government House leader Yvon Pinard authorized publication of the estimates anyway.

That is exactly—

Mr. Pinard: The hon. member just mentioned that if I were to deny that he would accept my word. I formally deny it.

Mr. Crosbie: Madam Speaker, naturally I will accept the government House leader's word and say that the Canadian Press, the *Montreal Gazette* and a host of other news agencies across this country will have to explain why they took the name of the government House leader in vain by stating that he authorized the release and told them to go ahead. In this article from the *Montreal Gazette* it is stated that the Government House Leader authorized publication. The article then deals with the President of the Treasury Board and it states:

—he regarded the embargo as still in force.

This afternoon in the Senate Senator Perrault said that as far as the government is concerned the embargo remains in