

reviewed—makes a total mockery of the parliamentary oversight process in this important area of human rights?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker. The purpose of briefings, if they are requested, is to allow people who have never appeared before a parliamentary committee to understand the nature and scope of the procedure, as the Hon. Member suggests, but also to get an insight with respect to the function and role of public officials. They are public officials and have the right to question what is expected of them in carrying out their responsibility. This has been going on as a continuing process. It is not a secret process. It is a logical process, as pointed out by the Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, the only person who requested these meetings was the official from the Prime Minister's Office who put the meetings together. This is nothing more than blatant political thuggery by the Prime Minister, and that's not good enough.

An Hon. Member: Right on.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robinson: It is thuggery, that is all it is, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I do not know whether the Hon. Member has made it better or worse by calling it "political thuggery"—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker:—but it might have been worse if it was just "thuggery". In any event, I would urge all Hon. Members to use as much discretion with their language as possible.

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ACCESS TO INFORMATION

REFERRAL OF INQUIRIES TO PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. In view of the additional news today that the Prime Minister has ordered all Government Departments to vet through his office any potentially embarrassing requests under the Access to Information Act, will the Deputy Prime Minister explain to the House why the Prime Minister is using his office in a way which displays such utter contempt not just for the access to information legislation but for Parliament itself?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, perhaps it might be worthwhile to remind the Hon. Member that there

would not have been an Access to Information Act had it not been for this Government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: Second, it is perfectly normal to ensure that accurate and timely information is provided, and that is all that was covered in this particular request.

REFERENCE TO POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSING INFORMATION

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Deputy Prime Minister and it is on the same topic. In the letter the Clerk of the Privy Council sent to certain Deputy Ministers, he said in part that Ministers were personally to sign off on proposed release of information which is potentially embarrassing. It is not for accuracy but for embarrassment. Since when is potential embarrassment a criterion for screening information under the Access to Information Act?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Very simply put, Mr. Speaker, from time to time inaccurate information could be embarrassing, I suspect.

[Translation]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): I have a supplementary for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Instead of trying to get around the Access to Information Act in order to hide embarrassing situation, perhaps the Government should avoid getting into such situations in the first place. Wouldn't that be better than refusing to disclose the facts to Parliament and the people of Canada?

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): I repeat, Mr. Speaker, it is a fairly normal process to ensure that the information which is provided is accurate—

Mr. Boudria: And not embarrassing.

Mr. Mazankowski: I rest my case there. The Hon. Member would certainly like to find embarrassing information. He not only makes it a hobby, he makes it a full-time occupation.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

SITUATION OF EARLY RETIREES

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration and it has to do with the Forget Commission Report. The Minister told me on Monday he would answer