

*Privilege*

[English]

PRESS RELEASE OF MINISTER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND  
NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege in relation to a statement dated August 2, 1988, by and over the name of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. McKnight). The statement I bring to your attention and to the attention of the House as a question of privilege is that at the top of the communique, a press release, we find:

Amendment to Indian Act removes death rule.

If you give me a moment, Mr. Speaker, I will explain to you why I do not think this is simply a matter of literary latitude by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and why it is unacceptable and constitutes a question of privilege.

First, the statement is false. There is no Bill before the House. There is no Bill in the hands of the opposition Parties. The first line of the statement states:

Bill McKnight, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, has received all-Party support to amend a section of the Indian Act referred to as the death rule.

This morning I again got in touch with the Minister's office and was denied once more the opportunity to see the wording proposed to amend the Indian Act. This is crucial because this House gave the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs a statutory responsibility, not just a reference but a statutory responsibility, to produce for Parliament a report on the impact of Bill C-31, which came as a result of the Lovelace case at the United Nations. This was a reference that placed certain pressures on Canada and on this Parliament to act. The Minister in this press release describes the death rule as a technical error found in the 1985 Indian Act amendments known as Bill C-31.

Over the last 10 days I have been contacted by a number of groups and individuals who believed as a result of this press release that an amendment, a change, had in fact occurred. There are thousands of women and their children who are presently denied reinstatement as status Indians in Canada as a result of this so-called technical error. They, Mr. Speaker, are being denied certain rights and privileges provided by Bill C-31. For example, medical and dental care, educational benefits, the right to be on band membership codes and to live at home in their own home communities. There are thousands of them. If this were simply a communique that had gone out which had had broad literary latitude, I would not have raised the matter. The fact is that the opening line is simply false. It says, "Amendment to Indian Act removes death rule". There is no Bill. No Bill has been passed.

**Mr. Lewis:** There is certainly no privilege here.

**Mr. Fulton:** Since I am the spokesperson for my Party on aboriginal matters in Canada and since a false impression has been created right across Canada by this press release, I

believe it affects my privileges both as the spokesperson on aboriginal affairs and as a Member of Parliament who deals with this issue on a regular basis. If you find there is a prima facie case of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to move the necessary motion to have it dealt with.

The Minister of State (Mr. Lewis) does not seem to think this is particularly serious. I think it is when a Minister of the Crown puts out a press release that is false. Anyone who can read knows that this press release is false. First, the headline is false. Second, the statement made within it that the opposition Parties had given all-Party support to an amendment we have never seen is categorically false. For him to imply to the First Nations, the first citizens and to the media of this country that what he has obtained is factual when it is not is false. The Minister has abused my privileges and he has abused the First Nations.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have listened with care to the Hon. Member for Skeena. I will reserve and ask him if he could assist the Chair by sending a copy of the press release to my office.

## OFFICIAL REPORT—DELAY IN PUBLICATION

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege on behalf of all Members of the House. We all appreciate the tremendous job which the *Hansard* reporters do and all of the people involved in preparing *Hansard* for Members of Parliament and for all those interested in being aware of the proceedings of the House of Commons.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Riis:** My comments in no way are to be a reflection on the tremendous work done by all of those participating in the *Hansard* process.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Riis:** I particularly appreciate the fact that the House of Commons sits until ten o'clock in the evenings now as a result of extended hours. At about noon today we received yesterday's *Hansard*, which I think is quite a remarkable feat when you consider these sittings have been going on day after day all summer long. I simply draw to your attention a very serious problem. One of the uses *Hansard* is put to, particularly by Members of Parliament both in opposition and in government, is that in the late evening we review thoroughly what has gone on in the House of Commons and review carefully statements made by individual Members as well as statements made, perhaps more important, by members of the Cabinet. This enables us to raise, if necessary and appropriate, responsible questions in Question Period.

● (1220)

I simply want to draw to the attention of the House the difficulty this poses on Fridays. When we do not receive *Hansard* for obvious reasons until noon on Friday, recognizing