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Bar Alliance MP from House for 'long time': Boudria

Andrew McIntosh

National Post

OTTAWA - A Liberal Cabinet minister says a Canadian Alliance MP should be barred from Parliament for "a long time" for angrily picking up the **Mace** in what may be the worst breach of Commons decorum on record.

Don Boudria, the Public Works Minister, said Keith Martin, an Alliance MP from British Columbia, must receive a strong punishment for grabbing the **Mace** and hoisting it on Wednesday night.

"This man shouldn't be sitting in the Commons for a long time. 'Long time' to be defined by the Speaker and others, and not the House leaders. Rapping knuckles isn't good enough for something like this," Mr. Boudria said.

Mr. Martin grabbed the **Mace** - the golden rod that symbolizes the authority of the Speaker - after the Liberals used what he called "a poison pill" amendment to kill his private member's bill to decriminalize possession of marijuana.

"Parliament is not a democracy any more!" shouted Mr. Martin, complaining that he had wasted four years of effort, before putting the rod back and marching out in protest. Other MPs followed.

Mr. Martin later apologized, but faces a possible charge of gross contempt of Parliament and could be called to the Bar of the House of Commons for an exceptional reprimand by the Speaker.

Ralph Goodale, the Government House leader, immediately lodged a formal complaint against Mr. Martin for breach of parliamentary privilege. "There could be no more serious affront to the dignity, decorum and order of the House than that," he said.

Opposition MPs said they do not condone what Mr. Martin did, but added the government should also be held accountable for using undemocratic tactics to kill a widely supported bill.

"It's easy to know it's wrong, but I think he had to make a point," Bill Casey, a Tory MP.

"What the Liberals did renders meaningless the powers given to MPs to bring forward private member's bills. It was a travesty of democracy," Gilles Duceppe, the Bloc Québécois leader, said.

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