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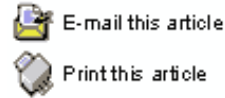


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PRINT EDITION

# Alliance misused free mail, Tories say

By CAMPBELL CLARK  
Friday, May 17, 2002 – Page A4



OTTAWA -- The federal Tories are charging that interim Canadian Alliance leader John Reynolds abused his free-mail privileges to send out a political letter to woo Progressive Conservative members.

The letter, signed by new Alliance Leader Stephen Harper, was mailed out to Tories across the country by Mr. Reynolds, who has led the party in Parliament since Stockwell Day stepped down in December to launch a leadership race. But Mr. Reynolds used his so-called "franking" privileges, the free-mail system for MPs, to send the letter.

Tory House Leader Peter MacKay charged that the letter was an abuse of the privilege that allows MPs to send mail related to their parliamentary functions for free.

He said he and others on the Tory membership list in his Pictou-Antigonish-Guysborough riding received "franked" letters. "This is purely political," Mr. MacKay said.

"Not only is it inappropriate, it's against the franking privilege rules. Harper is a former member of Parliament. He should know that's not allowed."

Mr. MacKay said the letter was signed by Mr. Harper and sent out without even a cover letter from Mr. Reynolds before the new Alliance Leader was returned to Parliament in a by-election this week.

But Mr. Reynolds insisted the letter, which suggested that Tory Leader Joe Clark had misled his members about Mr. Harper's offer of a parliamentary coalition, fell within the rules, and the Tories' accusation is wrong.

"That's absolute baloney. Peter MacKay should know better," he said. "The only things you cannot frank are to raise money or sell memberships. To send a letter from our leader to Tories is well within the franking rules."

He also charged the Tories were engaging in "petty politics."

A memo from Parliament's board of internal economy sent last November says the postal privileges "are to be used for the carrying out of members' parliamentary functions or for matters that are essential or incidental thereto."

It adds: "Members are reminded, therefore, that the intent behind the franking privileges and the use of House of Commons goods and services is to facilitate communication between constituents and their members, and not to facilitate communications between other groups and constituents via the member."

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