

Questions of Privilege

Mr. Riis: I refer to a report headlined:

Reisman likens free-trade foes to Nazis

Mr. Reisman as a senior public servant, an individual with ambassador's status, has likened free trade foes to Nazis.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Order, Mr. Speaker. This is an abuse of the rules.

Mr. Riis: When the question was put to him he said that he does not regret his remarks.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): This is abuse; another NDP abuse.

Mr. Riis: It seems to me that I am constantly being interrupted by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark). Perhaps if he has an observation he will rise and make his point.

It makes my job as a Member of Parliament very difficult in terms of my constituents and others, having heard from one of the senior public servants of our country—

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): This is an abuse of the rules.

Mr. Riis:—an individual paid by the taxpayers of Canada presumably to represent all Canadians and all taxpayers who has indicated and referred to those who oppose the agreement he has negotiated—

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Another NDP abuse.

Mr. Riis:—namely, all of the Members of the Opposition, as Nazis and has—

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Riis:—referred to them as having the same status as Joseph Goebbels.

I ask you to consider this matter, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that Ambassador Reisman is not a Member of the House of Commons. I realize also that when you examine Beauchesne's Fifth Edition you will find that calling anyone a Nazi is certainly unparliamentary.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Give us the quotation. Follow the rules of the House.

Mr. Riis: To refer to anyone as "Goebbels" is also unparliamentary. I ask that you look into this matter.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Such contempt for the House of Commons.

Mr. Riis: I have been constantly interrupted by the Secretary of State for External Affairs. I usually give him the benefit of listening when he makes his statements and I look forward to him standing in his place, someone who has played a significant role in the negotiations, and explain, if he believes that Ambassador Reisman calling opposition Members

"Nazis" and likening us to Goebbels is an appropriate use of the term.

I do believe that our privileges as Members of Parliament, particularly those in the Opposition, have been breached by this senior public official.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to the same question of privilege. I want to draw to your attention that apparently Mr. Reisman repeated and confirmed—

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Apparently.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West):—his remarks in committee yesterday. At that time he said, according to a press report:

—that one doesn't try to deal "rationally and logically" with these people who "deliberately set out to defy fact and reason."

Mr. Reisman not only accused those who do not agree with his and the Government's free trade agreement as being Nazis but he has accused them, in effect, of telling untruths when they oppose the Government's policy.

Mr. Reisman speaks as ambassador, as chief trade negotiator. He is not only speaking as a private citizen on behalf of the Government when he says those things, but he is accusing those people who do not agree with the Government's position as people who "deliberately set out to defy fact and reason". He, Ambassador Reisman, is saying that they are untruthful and he is accusing as being untruthful Members of Parliament to whom the Government and its servants, including Mr. Reisman, are accountable and responsible. He is accusing also of untruthfulness not only parliamentarians, like the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner), and dozens and dozens of other Members of Parliament, but he is making the same accusations against millions of individual Canadians.

With respect to Members' privileges, I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to examine what Ambassador Reisman said. I want to tell you that if you find there is a *prima facie* case of a breach of Members' privileges I for one would be quite prepared to move the appropriate motion immediately.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not the Chair's intention to have the House enter into a long debate on this matter. The Chair with regard to this particular matter is willing to hear the different House Leaders.

Ms. Copps: I rise on a different point, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will come back to the Hon. Member. On the same matter I believe the Minister of State (Mr. Lewis) is rising.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of State and Minister of State (Treasury Board)): Mr. Speaker, I regret very much that my colleagues have tried to raise this as a matter on the floor of the House. I think it demeans the debate. We are prepared to have a debate on the substance of the matter.