

*Status of Women*

Prime Minister is chauvinistic because he calls a female a lady; I believe the lady should be thankful she was called such.

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

**Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with considerable interest to the comments of the hon. member for York South-Weston (Mrs. Appolloni). I have often listened to her observations with great respect, but this evening I listened quietly in an attempt to understand the drift of her message. I know the member is a true and faithful supporter of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the party he represents. One can always tell when the government is in a difficult position—the decibel level rises very substantially in defence of an indefensible position.

**Miss Bégin:** That is sexism.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** A lot of people in televisionland will not appreciate that I have the great fortune of sitting directly across from the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin). This is one of the great joys of my life; I am able to watch her in action. I observed her rise in the House today on a specious question of privilege. I appreciate the fact that she very often says things without thinking before she speaks, so I accept the last interjection on the same basis.

**Miss Bégin:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** I think I have struck a sensitive chord.

**Miss Bégin:** I should like to point out that what the hon. member just said is an attack on the privileges of all women of the House. In the last months sexism has arisen more in the conversations in this place than when I first became a member of the House.

When I spoke this afternoon some male members opposite made vulgar references to the fact that some people have problems in certain months. Tonight the member started his speech by referring to the woman who spoke a few moments before him and by talking about decibel levels. Nature did not make all vocal chords exactly the same—

**Some hon. Members:** Order, order!

**Miss Bégin:** —and I think that type of innuendo is sexist.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, will I be allowed an opportunity to speak on that point of order?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):** I will recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) on the point of order raised by the hon. minister, but I do not think it is reasonable to suggest, with the state of the argument at this point, that the Chair can find a case of privilege in the remarks raised. I say this because it is important for the Chair to distinguish between debate which may not be acceptable to some members in some parts of the House at some times, and the actual matter of privilege. I think the hon. minister may or may not—and I make no judgment on it at all—have a point

of debate, but I do not see that I can find a question of privilege. Before a final ruling in that regard, I will listen to the hon. member for Saskatoon West.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, I think I understand the drift of what Your Honour will finally adjudicate on this matter. I fully subscribe to the point of view that there is absolutely no point of order. In case there is any doubt that my remarks were directed toward the hon. member for York South-Weston—and I think the blues will underline this—let me point out that I did not discriminate with respect to any member on the government benches. They all speak in high decibels because their position is very weak. I say that without regard to sex, origin or location. I did not in any way suggest that it was the hon. member for York South-Weston, for whom I have the greatest respect. All members of the House are equal regardless of their sex, which is a point the hon. minister does not understand. She does a disservice to her position when she suggests that such is not the case.

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

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** I know the Minister of National Health and Welfare will be somewhat concerned when I direct my remarks to a male member of the House of Commons. Hopefully she will not rise every two minutes on points of order suggesting that I am attacking the males in the House.

I should like to talk about the minister concerned, because I think he is the basis of this entire motion. We as opposition members have the right to question and look at the actions of ministers of the Crown.

During the course of this debate we will be looking at the actions of the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) who is responsible for reporting to the House on behalf of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Since the minister's appointment to his portfolio, he has reminded me of a character in Al Capp's *L'il Abner*. This minister is the Joe Btfsplk of the current cabinet. Wherever he goes, whatever he does, there seems to be a storm cloud crashing around his head and lightning striking everything that comes within proximity of him. The minister has the propensity to get himself and the government into absolutely unnecessary difficulty. I make my remarks today as an opposition member because I want to be constructive and help the minister. He is one of the few elected ministers from western Canada so I have a very deep interest in his welfare. I know the minister fully appreciates that we have an interest in things indigenous to western Canada. Liberal cabinet ministers and dinosaurs are rare objects of antiquity which must be protected. In particular members from western Canada must attempt to advise and help the minister in the pursuit of his responsibilities. The minister has become a spokesman on virtually every western Canadian topic which has crossed a cabinet desk.

I was interested in an editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, a newspaper which has had a long tradition of supporting the Liberal Party of Canada. The editorial made reference to the minister's propensity for getting into difficulty. I bring this up