

Point of Order

Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski), but I do not think we need to spend a prolonged period of time on this, at least at this time under a question of privilege.

Mr. Rossi: Let's get the truth.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, it would not be my intention to prolong this discussion. However, the Hon. Member knows that we did offer, during the course of the negotiations, confidential briefings to the Leaders of the New Democratic Party and the Official Opposition. That was turned down and that is fair ball.

I have been in Opposition as well as in Government. I think the Hon. Member recognizes that it is not proper to offer briefings to one Party and not the other. That is a long-established rule which the Government employs. However, I can assure the Hon. Member that under the aegis of a standing committee where there would be members of all Parties in attendance, we would certainly arrange to have briefings at any time. I think that can be arranged.

• (1510)

We hope to convene the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade very soon so that it can be seized with this issue and all the details can be examined in full. However, I say to the Hon. Member that if he is a member of a standing committee that wants to be enlightened on certain aspects, I am certain that under the aegis of an all-party agreement that can be arranged.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

STATEMENT BY MEMBER

Mr. Jack Shields (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, we are one of the strongest trading nations in the world. One of our largest untapped markets today is mainland China. China is our second largest customer for Canadian grain producers and is one of our oldest and most important customers. Not only are the Chinese good customers, they have become good friends over the years. We have established a respectful relationship which is friendly and cordial.

I submit that nothing but real harm to our relations with mainland China could result if we allow disparaging remarks in the House that show disrespect to that country while at the same time showing a real lack of sensitivity—

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary is rising on a point of order. He may very well have a valid point, but I must remind him that it is not a point of order, but a point of argument.

Someone may or may not have said something in the Chamber to which the Hon. Member takes exception but,

unless the Hon. Member can quickly give some direction to the Chair as to where his comments are proceeding, I do not see it as a point of order, at least so far.

Mr. Shields: Mr. Speaker, it happened twice in the House. The first time I overlooked it.

I refer you to page 9912 of *Hansard* where the Leader of the New Democratic Party said:

The Minister, in addition to his colleague last week, must be tuned into Radio Peking—

I suggest that that is not only disparaging to Mainland China, it is very ignorant and disparaging to ethnic Chinese Canadians. I think it is bigoted and should be withdrawn. That is my point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary's point is specifically that, according to the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary, a comment by the Leader of the New Democratic Party amounts to a bigoted comment and ought to be withdrawn.

In view of that position taken by the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary, I would of course hear from someone from the New Democratic Party. The Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) is seeking the floor.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing offensive about referring to Radio Peking. There is nothing whatsoever offensive about that particular remark.

We know that China is a tremendous customer for Canadian grain and potash. Any advertising of that radio station might be a positive feature.

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I submit to the House that the Parliamentary Secretary's statement is absolutely mischievous and provocative, and is designed to cause harm to the Leader who meant no harm at all. The Hon. Member should withdraw his nonsense.

Mr. Speaker: This is not the first time or perhaps the last when Hon. Members on both sides feel they wish to air, through a point of order or a question of privilege, what they believe is a grievance.

While the Chair certainly accepts a certain amount of latitude in these matters, I must indicate to the House that this is not a point of order. It may well be a complaint and I would ask the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to perhaps have some discussion with other Hon. Members.

I think the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) clearly indicated that all Hon. Members agree that whatever language is used in this place, it certainly ought not be intentionally used to slight any of Canada's friends or any Canadians of whatever ethnic background in this country. With that, I think we can leave the subject.