

*Supply*

that principle of absolute parliamentary immunity which is so convenient for some Members who are fond of tarnishing reputations.

[*English*]

**Mr. Deans:** Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to be drawn into a debate on this point, but I say to the Minister that it is a question that has not escaped my concern. The question of parliamentary immunity is one that I have been interested in for the better part of the last 16 years, on occasion having seen the immunity being used in what I personally felt was an improper way, I must confess not only by members of the Opposition. I sense that is also done by Members in Government from time to time. It is a misunderstanding in some ways of how immunity was intended to be used.

Immunity was necessary in the first instance and continues to be necessary in order to allow Members of Parliament freely to raise questions that are of public concern without having to go through the court system, Parliament, of course, being the highest court in the land. The immunity that is afforded Members of Parliament enables them to raise questions in this highest court, which is not at all like the immunity afforded in other courts.

There is a certain requirement on the part of everyone to exercise judgment and care, as I have always done and as most Members do. If the Minister is suggesting that perhaps the question of immunity ought to be considered, if the Government is prepared to refer the question of guidelines to the appropriate committee for consideration, and if the Government cares to make a motion that the question of immunity be considered in committee, I will be only too happy not only to second it but to guarantee the support of this caucus.

● (1200)

**Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister of State (International Trade)):** Mr. Speaker, I find myself in disagreement with the two previous speakers and I have some difficulty understanding their position.

**Mr. Deans:** You have difficulty understanding my position?

**Mr. Regan:** Yes, and I will outline for the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) my concern in due course. First of all, it does appear to me to be unusual, or the threshing of old straw, for the Opposition to spend yet another day on this so-called issue at a time when there are many serious problems with our economy and there are many matters of substance with regard to public issues of the day which could well be discussed. I believe the Opposition are going to be hard-pressed to mount an interesting debate on the subject throughout the day in view of the amount of publicity which it has already been given.

The Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nielsen) in his opening remarks said that the Government's position was shameful and unbelievable, that this morning we did not immediately go through some sort of contortion in order to make a non-confidence vote into something else and to have this matter go, as he wishes, to committee. I would like to say

that it is a very strange piece of thinking indeed, Mr. Speaker, when on Friday they move a non-confidence vote on this subject, place it properly, follow the procedure for a non-confidence vote which can bring down the Government if the Government is defeated and cause an election in the land, and then on Monday morning at eleven o'clock they suddenly say; "Well, we really did not mean what we did and we are now prepared to do something which would make this a different sort of debate, if the Government will agree". Then when the Government does not immediately do handsprings, it is criticized for its shameful and outrageous behaviour.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Squirm on it.

**Mr. Regan:** I do not find much squirming in that. As for the Leader of the Opposition, it has been said that all the galls have been divided into three parts, and I believe he has all three parts when he takes that sort of position.

I would like to say something about guidelines. I believe what we so often see is the problem in public life of the difference between the position which people take when they are the "outs" and when they are the "ins". Today we have that classic example of a split in points of view between those who are on the outside of Government at the moment and those who are on the inside. I believe it is noteworthy that during the time the Conservatives were the Government in Canada, they did not take such a matter to a committee or did not legislate on this particular subject.

**Mr. Nielsen:** There are stiffer guidelines, too.

**Mr. Regan:** I believe it is also of note that in democratic Governments in this country, in the Provinces as well as in the federal Government, guidelines where they exist vary greatly. Guidelines in national Governments usually provide for the disclosure of assets. They usually provide a ban on the buying and selling of stocks which are publicly traded, and they usually deal with the necessity of providing for the establishment by Ministers who have ongoing business investments of blind trusts which are beyond the arm's length of Ministers. Guidelines also usually provide for the declaration of receipt of gifts or benefits over a certain value.

If one asks why guidelines have traditionally existed, they will be told they are not only for protection against misuse of office, but also for the so-called "Caesar's wife" rule of virtue not only existing, but appearing to exist. When I listened to the words of the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain, I was not quite sure what he was suggesting when he said "all Members of this House". He may have been returning to another interesting question, that is, whether there should be something in the way of public disclosure guidelines for all Members of Parliament and not just for Cabinet Ministers. Every Member of Parliament in this country, whether a Cabinet Minister or not, is in a special position in relation to Government, and that includes Opposition Members as well as Government Members. I believe that is a subject for people to consider.