

The difficulty the Chair is having is that I cannot bring this problem within the scope of privilege. No matter how serious the issue may be, as I say, I have to advise the Hon. Member for Hamilton East that her point does not come within privilege.

The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Ms. Dewar) has some remarks. I would ask her to keep in mind the same strictures to which the Chair must subscribe.

ALLEGED RIDICULE OF WOMEN BY MEMBERS

Ms. Marion Dewar (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I do think it is a point of privilege—

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Order.

Ms. Dewar: —I would hope that—

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Ms. Dewar) is rising. She has said that she thinks she has a point of privilege. I will hear whether the Hon. Member has or has not a question of privilege. Surely in this place she has every right to be extended the usual courtesies while she attempts to make her point. The Hon. Member.

Ms. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon in response to some questions some Hon. Members from the Government ridiculed and laughed at questions asked. It is not just an Hon. Member who is being ridiculed and criticized in this Chamber but it is the women of Canada—

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Don't be so presumptuous.

Ms. Dewar: —which is something that is very distasteful not just to myself but I am sure to the majority of the Members of this House. I would ask you whether it is possible, by way of privilege for the women of Canada to demand the same kind of dignity from Members of the House of Commons as the men constantly require. I think those comments made by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie) in laughing at reproductive technology this afternoon in this House are an insult to the women of Canada.

An Hon. Member: That is a fraud.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member may very well be offended and, for that matter, people outside or inside this Chamber may be offended but I have to say to the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Ms. Dewar) that privilege is a narrow thing in this Chamber. As I have explained on other occasions, and I remind Members and also the public watching and listening, that when something has been done which limits or interferes with the capacity of an Hon. Member from carrying out his or her duties as a Member of Parliament that may very well be privilege. It is not privilege just because there are strong differences of opinion expressed in the Chamber or even certain comments which may be disagreeable in the Chamber. It can be privilege if, as I say, the attack on any Hon. Member

in whatever way is such that the Hon. Member cannot carry on his or her duties.

In this case, while the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) and the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain have expressed their feelings on the matter, those feelings may or may not be understandable, given the context, but I have to say to both Members that what has taken place here in an unofficial exchange across the Chamber does not go to the narrow point of privilege and, as your Speaker, I cannot so rule.

The Hon. Member asks what other recourse she might have. That other recourse is to proceed along the lines of what the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin) did today. There is the usual political recourse outside of this Chamber when an Hon. Member can express views about any other Hon. Member. I think both Hon. Members have made their points. I find that under the circumstances the matter is not a question of privilege.

I will hear the Hon. Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie) but I would ask him to be conscious of the fact that I have ruled that the matter does not constitute a question of privilege.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, I am conscious of your ruling. I just wanted to say that the circumstances of my remarks which have offended these Hon. Members opposite are not correctly put on the record.

I said nothing at all about the women of Canada. Nor did I say anything insulting to the women of Canada. I addressed myself to remarks made by two or three women, one of whom happens to be the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) who had made a particularly silly statement about the free trade arrangement, that it would open up Canada to a tremendous expansion in the surrogate mother industry with Americans coming up here to search for babies for export. I responded to that and to several other remarks made by women who support the NDP in St. John's, Newfoundland. At no time did I say anything insulting to Canadian womanhood. I have too much respect for the women of Canada to believe that their views are represented by these two Hon. Members here who apparently want to be treated equally but then whenever anyone debates lustily with them they want to bring up charges of sexism, whatever that is, or call upon their sex to save them and give them a special and peculiar status—

Mr. Speaker: I hear the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin) rising on a point of order. Perhaps all Hon. Members would just hear the Chair for a moment. There will be a cut-off point and it is coming very rapidly in this exchange because this is getting into debate. The Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, given that I raised this issue today in Question Period I hope you will afford me a few moments as you have the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie).