

Privilege—Hon. M. Lambert

Mr. Paproski: Donald Duck again!

Mr. Broadbent: A quacking backbencher in the Liberal party interrupts me. The reference is to conventions of political parties. I want him to know we pay for our conventions, not the people of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: The Deputy Prime Minister would have put his finger more directly on the issue if he had given it more thought. We must not get into the habit of turning parliament, for which the people pay, into an extension of a convention.

Mr. MacFarlane: Let us not waste time!

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): The Liberal whip has interjected. He said we ought not to waste our time upon what I believe, quite frankly, to be a dreadful case of the Liberal party assuming it has a right to wallow in the public trough all the time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I think the Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) ought to be reminded that today is Ash Wednesday. Perhaps it would not hurt if he were to cover his head with just a few ashes.

I do not think it will be lost on members of parliament that the offer of consultation with opposition parties comes, for the first time, only after the matter has been raised.

I would be the last to argue that there are not appropriate parliamentary functions, functions coming within Your Honour's dictum, which can be held here. Of course there are. Nobody is arguing about that at all. The question is whether it is proper in the circumstances for members of a political party to use the facilities to the extent and for the purpose that they are reported to be wanting to use them. That is the first thing. I have not learned from the government House leader what the extent and purpose are. I have not learned from the hon. member for Chicoutimi (Mr. Langlois) what the purpose is and how far this has gone.

● (1532)

I have been told that Your Honour consulted the hon. member for Chicoutimi with respect to this matter as a result of some statements which were made and which Your Honour heard on CBC radio earlier this week. The letter Your Honour wrote to me—I think properly; I do not fault Your Honour for that—obviously crossed the path of my letter expressing concern to Your Honour. Under these circumstances I think the House of Commons is entitled to the facts.

As Your Honour said in your letter, Your Honour sought and received assurances that there is no intention to permit attendance at this event by other than registered convention delegates and convention workers. I think past experiences confirm the numbers which will be here to use the facilities. There are 200 parliamentarians in the Liberal party, more or

[Mr. Broadbent.]

less, counting members of parliament and Senators who, under the rules, are entitled to use the facilities. If each of those parliamentarians invited ten people—and under the rules that would be quite proper—there would be 2,000 registered delegates.

I suppose the information Your Honour received from the hon. member for Chicoutimi, or whoever provided the information, did not refer to the number of registered guests, observers, spouses and others who are legitimate attenders at political conventions and who, I am sure, are now included in a blanket invitation. The number could reach nearly 4,000 people using the House of Commons on that day. From the information your Honour transmitted to me I am satisfied that Your Honour has no way of knowing the number, and I think that is serious from the point of view of security. If the government House leader wants to make light of security problems, that is fine, but I do not make light of them.

It is true that members of parliament use this building for entertaining members of the public. Your Honour uses it for entertaining heads of state, representatives of state, members of parliament, visitors from other parliaments and segments of the community. The Governor General sometimes uses it, and on any occasion when it is appropriate that Your Honour be present, whether it is a Christmas party or anything else, this building is used properly. That is not a bad guideline for Your Honour to use; any event which is parliamentary in nature is appropriate in this building.

Aside from hotel operators, restaurateurs, and other commercial considerations which are great indeed and are a constant source of irritation between the city and the Hill, I think the importance of using these buildings for events of a parliamentary nature is being overlooked. I respectfully suggest that this particular use is unprecedented in our political history. I agree that we have used this building for political purposes. We have used the restaurant facilities, but never have there been 4,000 people here in connection with a political convention.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Hon. members opposite laugh. I am sorry this strikes them as strange. I will not be sat down because the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) is exercising a sense of ethics which is similar to the ethics he used when he flew a nanny here from Great Britain.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): There are two bites at this apple. I assume that the delegates to this convention are quite properly using the Election Expenses Act to benefit under the taxation system because of their rather high registration fees. They are similar to those in the Progressive Conservative party, \$175, but the difference is that they will be using a public facility for nothing.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!