

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 5, 1972

The House met at 11 a.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. RICHARDSON—ACCURACY OF ANSWER RESPECTING
NEW PAY CHEQUES

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise on a matter of personal privilege. Yesterday when I was not in the House—

Mr. Diefenbaker: When you were behind the curtain.

Mr. Richardson: —the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), as reported in *Hansard* on page 1891, said that a statement I made was false. Mr. Speaker, I simply wish to confirm to the House that both of the answers I gave on Wednesday were accurate in every respect.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Richardson: The use of the maple leaf symbol on our cheque forms was, of course, a decision of the government of Canada. A secondary objective was to achieve greater security and in that respect, as I clearly stated, my department was advised by the RCMP.

I do not wish to take the time of the House, Mr. Speaker, to restate exactly what I said on Wednesday but I would, Sir, be proud to do so in exactly the same words which I used. If the statements I made were not true I would not have made them in this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Withdraw!

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I point to page 1860 of *Hansard* where the statement made by the hon. gentleman to which I alluded is found. It is very clear. I read from page 1860:

In the explanation that was sent out along with some of the pay cheques it was stated that these changes were introduced to make fraudulent misuse of government cheques increasingly difficult. Did the disappearance of the coat of arms comply with the reasons for the removal thereof? A little later on it is stated that the new design was prompted by a continuing concern for improved security. I ask the minister, has the removal of the coat of arms in any way added to the security of the cheques?

• (1110)

Your Honour said:

Order please. That obviously is debate. If the minister can reply briefly he will be allowed to do so, but I do not think we should become involved in a debate on this matter.

Then the minister replied:

Mr. Speaker, security was a second objective of the change in the cheques, and it was done on the recommendation of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: Then I said:

The mounted police made that recommendation? Is that as true as the statement made by the Prime Minister concerning the RCMP when he had to make a retreat?

Mr. Trudeau: That is nothing but a red herring.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The Prime Minister interrupts and applauds that smart statement on the part of the minister. He applauded it.

Mr. Hees: He certainly did.

Mr. Diefenbaker: He applauded it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister has risen on a question of privilege and according to tradition the right hon. gentleman is allowed to comment on the question of privilege raised by the Minister of Supply and Services. We should not, however, become involved in debate on the matter.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I mentioned a moment ago that the Prime Minister went into ecstasies that the answer was so smart and put the responsibility on the shoulders of the RCMP. Every newspaper in Canada that I have read pointed out that this is what the minister said and meant. There is no question about it. Having made that statement, the minister suddenly decided he had got himself into difficulties. He rushed out to the television cameras to explain the unexplainable and pretended he had not said it.

Mr. Richardson: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I doubt that much can be gained by continuing this matter. I do not want to prevent the minister from commenting further—would the minister kindly resume his seat. I suggest we could become involved in a long debate in trying to determine exactly what the minister said and how that statement might be interpreted. I doubt very much that anything can be gained by pursuing the matter further by way of question of privilege. We have obviously entered upon a debate which could be prolonged, and I do not think that would be of much assistance in the conduct of the affairs of the House.

Mr. Richardson: I agree with you, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot go further with the debate. I simply ask you, Sir, to rule on the one matter that is before the House this morning, the question of privilege concerning the statement