

ment itself and of the arguments which are all very valuable in attempting to come to a decision on this important subject.

There is one thing that is very clear. There is no doubt in my mind that the privileges, rights and immunities of members of this House are in the first place to be decided by this House and not by any other body.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Speaker:** The second is that there is, as I indicated in previous discussion on this order in council as it might affect members of the House of Commons, a very real danger in anybody, including this House, attempting to deal with matters of privilege in the abstract or in theory. That is a danger we have to recognize. In this instance, and as it has been since this matter was first raised, it is very difficult to deal with potential difficulties that may arise. However, that may have happened in the House. We may be faced with something we will have to take into consideration in a different way. It seems to me always preferable to assume that a member has the rights, privileges and immunities that have always surrounded a member until such time as a member finds himself unable to function and brings before this House the interference with his ability to function for consideration on a question of privilege. That is the most direct way to deal with it.

However, the matter has taken on other dimensions and the Minister of Justice has asked for time to consider an intervention. Therefore, I will hold the matter over until that intervention is made.

**Mr. Basford:** Mr. Speaker, I indicated earlier that I wanted to raise what has become, under our practice, a question of privilege. It is probably more correctly a point of order. It arises from a speech made in the House yesterday by the hon. member for Calgary North and words that he used in that speech. On Monday last Your Honour made a ruling on a question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Peace River—a ruling against the Prime Minister for certain words that he had used in this House.

At that time Your Honour said that you were ruling in the interests of protecting the dignity of parliament and that you were being diligent in that respect. Obviously, that is a matter of concern to you, that the dignity and decorum of the House of Commons be preserved. It is a task for which you have our full support in endeavouring to achieve. Especially now, with television in the House, it is important that we re-examine, if need be, the rules relating to conduct, behaviour and parliamentary language. I know, having been talking to the public outside, that people have been watching television and that they have been very concerned and upset to see and hear daily the unfounded innuendoes, slurs and allegations directed against Ministers of the Crown by members opposite.

● (1542)

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Basford:** In the past we on this side have not generally complained, Mr. Speaker, but the hon. member for Peace

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River recently raised a point of order and Your Honour took the occasion to make a ruling relating to the dignity of the House with regard to which you have our complete agreement and support. I therefore feel we have, as a result of your ruling on Monday, a new basis upon which to govern ourselves in the House.

Last night the hon. member for Calgary North made a speech, and I am sure he meant no ill. But in his usual exuberance and enthusiasm he made a forceful speech in the course of which he said, as reported at page 905 of *Hansard*:

It is not ministerial responsibility we should be talking about tonight, it is ministerial irresponsibility and culpability—

Well, Mr. Speaker, culpability is defined in the *Oxford Concise Dictionary* as “criminal or blameworthy” and in *Webster’s Third International* it is described as “guilty or criminal”. I think, therefore, it is quite clear on the basis of your ruling on Monday and from the citation to which you referred in that ruling—citation 140 which is familiar to us all—and the example cited from paragraph 155 of *Beauchesne’s*, that language of this kind is contrary to the citations of *Beauchesne* and contrary to the Standing Orders relating to debate and contrary to your ruling of Monday.

I will go on reading from the same page of *Hansard*, page 905. As reported in the same column, the hon. member said:

Because the opposition are interrogating us, and we are covering up—

He was referring to the government. Again, the words “covering-up” have connotations of interference in the administration of justice and are unparliamentary. Further on, in the next column, the hon. member is reported as saying, “That is untruthful”. It was a reference to a speech I made in Vancouver, and I think reference to *Beauchesne* would make it clear that the expression used is unparliamentary. On page 906, the hon. member said:

This is merely a plot to take the responsibility and the heat off their own shoulders because of their irresponsibility and culpability in this matter.

I referred a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, to the use of the word “culpability”. Again on page 906 the hon. member went on to say:

He could not have gathered a standing ovation from his audience by telling the truth.

The hon. member for Restigouche (Mr. Harquail) asked:

Are you calling him a liar?

Then the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) said “Yes, he is”. And he was referring to me.

**Some hon. Members:** Shame.

**Mr. Basford:** The hon. member for Vancouver South was again referring to a speech I made in Vancouver. It is unclear from the record to what part of that speech he was referring—whether it was that part of the speech which pointed out that despite the reorganization of the Conservative caucus it had been so reorganized that there was not one British Columbian member of parliament on the Conservative side who had been given a key position in the Conservative caucus. I am not sure