

AGRICULTURE

ALLEGED LACK OF FUNDS FOR RESEARCH—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, since there appears to be a very serious lack of funds for agricultural research, especially at the university level, and in light of the fact there has been a statement calling for more funds and staff to prevent the by-passing of important research projects in the agricultural field, will the Minister of Agriculture indicate what action he is going to take to correct what is potentially a very serious situation?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, we have done some checking and we find that the amount of research money we put in at the university level compares favourably with that of any nation with a standard of living comparable to ours, and is better than most. We do research as well in our own department. We are concerned about this situation and we are looking at it very closely.

POSSIBLE ANNOUNCEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY BY FOOD PRICES REVIEW BOARD—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, the minister really did not answer my question. The fact is that there has been some reduction and it could be very serious. Noting the statement that Canada must develop a fully articulated set of national agricultural policies, and taking into account the fact that the Food Prices Review Board is planning to come up with a statement of new agricultural policies by the end of this year, I would ask the Minister of Agriculture what action his department is taking, or is the Food Prices Review Board slowly moving into the area of formulating agricultural policy under the Minister of Agriculture?

● (1500)

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): They are perfectly welcome to do so if they find the money that goes along with it.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. DIEFENBAKER AND MR. TRUDEAU—RULING BY MR. SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: As I indicated yesterday, I have given some consideration to the extremely difficult questions of privilege that have been put before us over the last few days. I think hon. members will understand it is not without some difficulty that I will try to resolve the matter.

In view of all the disagreement that has come about in the discussion of these various questions, perhaps it might be wise to start with as much agreement as does exist and

Privilege—Mr. Diefenbaker; Mr. Trudeau

in fact, that is considerable. The first is that the definition of privilege is one that has been strictly adhered to and narrowly interpreted constantly. This has been said many times by my distinguished predecessor whose words I have had a number of occasions to refer to in this parliament:

On a number of occasions I have defined what I consider to be parliamentary privilege. Privilege is that which sets hon. members apart from other citizens, giving them rights which the public do not possess. I suggest we should be careful in construing any particular circumstance which might add to the privileges which have been recognized over the years, and perhaps over the centuries, as belonging to members of the House of Commons. In my view parliamentary privilege does not go much beyond the right of free speech in the House of Commons and the right of a member to discharge his duties in the House as a member of the House of Commons.

The second thing that seems to be agreed upon is the way in which privilege should be interpreted and that we ought not extend it lightly. It was suggested during the course of the discussion by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) that because there was an indication by both principals in this matter that perhaps they would be agreeable to having the matter aired before the committee, and if I thought that should be done or if I thought there was a prima facie case of privilege, it certainly might be a welcome and easy way to attempt to encourage the House to come to that view. It seems to me, however, that would be shirking the fundamental part of my duty, which is to make those findings I have been asked to make. Whether or not it is of particular joy, it does seem that that is my responsibility and therefore I will set out on that course now.

The third point on which there is agreement is that a dispute as to facts, a dispute as to opinions and a dispute as to conclusions to be drawn from an allegation of fact is a matter of debate and not a question of privilege. The fourth thing that then becomes germane to the case involved is, can an attack by one member of this House upon another, in respect of his conduct as a member of the House of Commons either now or in the past, constitute a question of privilege? That is a very serious consideration.

I might indicate to hon. members at the outset that there are indeed some clear and forceful precedents which indicate that it is almost impossible that an attack of that sort can be made to constitute a question of privilege. I would refer hon. members to a very clear and explicit decision enunciated on December 17, 1964, by Mr. Speaker MacNaughton. That is reported at page 1011 of the *Journals* of the House of Commons for December 17, 1964. It concerned, at the time, a question of privilege raised by the then member for Burnaby-Coquitlam. I am sorry; perhaps I have misled the House. The ruling I am about to read is from an earlier ruling by Mr. Speaker Michener. In any case, it has the same effect:

In my view, simple justice requires that no honourable member should have to submit to investigation of his conduct by the House or a Committee until he has been charged with an offence.

There are clear reasons for the wisdom of that process to be followed, that if one member seeks to complain about the remarks of another he ought to put it in the form of a charge and take those members before a committee, for the very simple reason that in that circumstance the proponent of the charge or complaint then is saddled with the onus of proving the case before the committee. Often,