

No. 146

JOURNALS

OF THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OF CANADA

OTTAWA, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 1975

2.00 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS

A question of privilege having arisen on Tuesday, May 27, 1975, and consideration thereof having resumed on Monday, June 2, 1975 the Right Honourable Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) proposed to move,— That the slanderous and libellous allegations made by the Prime Minister in a speech made in the Committee of the Whole House on Thursday, May 22, 1975, against the Member for Prince Albert, particularly the false statements regarding expenditures of public funds alleged to have been made while the said Member was the Prime Minister of Canada, be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, and that the said Committee be authorized to summon The Right Honourable The Prime Minister as a witness.

STATEMENT 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 honourable Members will understand it is not without some difficulty that I will try to resolve the matter now. 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, in fact that is considerable. The

first is that the definition of privilege is one that has been strictly adhered to, narrowly interpreted constantly, and, if I may requote what has been said many times by my distinguished predecessor and to which I have had a number of occasions to refer in this Parliament. "On a number of occasions I have defined what I consider to be parliamentary privilege. Privilege is that which sets honourable 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 to extend it lightly. It has been suggested during the course of the discussion by the honourable Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) that because there was an indication by both principals in this dis-