

Privilege—Mr. Diefenbaker

refer, however, to Wilding and Laundy's "An Encyclopedia of Parliament," where at page 597 it states that the rules—

—are concerned only with the protection of the reputation, the character and the good name of the House itself. It is in that respect only and for that limited purpose that they are concerned with imputations against the conduct of individual members.

That, I believe, is the general principle. There is no case in which a libellous statement made against a member of this House or of the British House of Commons has been treated other than as one of privilege, with the opportunity being given for the matter to be fully looked into by a committee of the House of Commons.

These were not loose statements made in the course of debate when one is agitated by the excitement of the debate; nor were they made in consequence of interruption and the like. Those statements were made when a man representing Her Majesty the Queen as First Minister stood up in the House of Commons and made such statements as the Prime Minister did. He is no greater and has no more authority and no more rights than any other member in this House of Commons. That is the essential fact. This is something he apparently has not learned.

Sir, at page 98 of Beauchesne's fourth edition these few words epitomize the conclusions arrived at:

—to constitute a breach of privilege they must concern the character or conduct of members—

It goes on to say, in their various capacities. What did the Prime Minister say? I do not want to requote what I have already placed before the House. The statements he made in connection with Harrington Lake have been construed by him as being true. He described it as the greatest land grab in history. A land grab does not mean the taking over of land by way of rental or otherwise. He referred to 4,800 acres. When he made that statement it was not true, because the only portion that was taken over was some 14 acres.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Only!

Mr. Diefenbaker: These hon. gentlemen will qualify ultimately for the view of the Prime Minister if I have to identify them.

That is the answer given by the National Capital Commission. When the prime minister took over, he took over everything out there. That is the situation which prevails. He left the impression, by the words he used, that I had in fact committed a wrong, that I had engaged in a land grab.

I do not have to deal with the other matter, the question of the so-called bomb-shelter. That was supposed to offset, I presume, the wasteful expenditures, the wanton expenditures of the government in purchasing two cars—dreadnoughts, I call them. What did the Prime Minister do? I have the figures from the department concerning the cost of the bomb-shelter, but lately I have found that the Prime Minister has lowered the roof by a couple of feet. I do not know what the purpose was.

An hon. Member: For a wine cellar.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Mr. Diefenbaker: I would remind the Prime Minister of another circumstance which causes me more concern than anything mentioned heretofore. He referred to the most secret place in Canada. It is on the classified list. It has never been removed from that list during the term of three prime ministers. Two and a half years ago the security committee was asked to remove it from the list of things that cannot be given publicity, but this was not done.

Nothing is more serious than for a prime minister or anyone else, or the Privy Council to reveal a situation concerning a highly secret defence installation, as he did the other day. I will not refer to where it is. I will not join with the Prime Minister in identifying something in respect of which he committed an offence against the security of our country. He referred to a matter that has never been freed from its secrecy. He did this the other day in order to show how wasteful the expenditures on my part were in the few hundreds of dollars expended by the Department of Public Works to provide a shelter which was not asked for under any circumstances.

He tried, so far as the shelter is concerned, to compare it with the wanton expenditure around Sussex Street at the Prime Minister's home never before equaled in history. He compared an expenditure of a few hundred dollars with his pool.

Mr. Trudeau: That was a gift.

Mr. Diefenbaker: When he speaks, I will be glad to hear from him. Who were the philanthropists who made possible that pool and were so desirous of helping the country that they first got in touch with the Department of National Revenue to find out whether or not they could deduct whatever the expenditure was in the determination of their income tax? That would be something for him to reveal today. Why does he hide it?

I mentioned all the cases the other day. I pointed out that they do constitute an interference in the rights and privileges of members of the House. A while ago the Prime Minister indicated to me that he did not recall the time when he apologized because, after all, he does not have a very good memory. When you can forget your age, you can forget almost anything.

● (1530)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: Here is the item. On November 28, 1969, the right hon. Prime Minister said:

Mr. Speaker, may I rise on a question of privilege. In reply to questions asked of me this morning by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), asking if I had received a letter from Mr. Saulnier with respect to the activities of the Company of Young Canadians, I replied in the negative. Notwithstanding the admonition of the right hon. gentleman that memories can be faulty, I nevertheless insisted that I knew of no such letter. I added, however, that "if there were such a letter, I would not hide it". Mr. Speaker, I should have heeded the wise counsel of the right hon. gentleman. On examination of my files I find that Mr. Saulnier did indeed write to me on March 17 of this year on this subject. I wish to apologize through you, Mr. Speaker, to the House and to the right hon. member for my erroneous reply. I have taken this earliest opportunity of correcting the record.

All I say to the Prime Minister now is this: Live up to what you did on November 28, 1969, and apologize to the House for a speech which as long as you live will consti-