

Members' Privileges In Parliament

DEBATE ON DRAFT CONSTITUTION

From Our Special Representative
NEW DELHI, May 19.

Constitution-making, which had hitherto proceeded at a snail-like pace, gained an unexpected momentum today when 14 articles dealing with officers and members of the Republican Parliament were passed in the Constituent Assembly.

A lively debate on the privileges and immunities of parliamentarians, which ensued at the end of three hours of speedy disposal of a number of clauses in the Draft Constitution, was the highlight of today's proceedings.

Speeches of Members who included some legal stalwarts of the country disclosed marked division of views on two points: the first concerned immunity from legal proceedings in respect of speeches made by members in Parliament and their publication, and the second, on the main provision itself that privileges and immunities of members in other respects should be such as might be determined by law by Parliament from time to time and that until then the House of Commons provision would be applicable.

BRITISH PRACTICE

Mr. H. V. Kamath remarked that it was beneath the dignity of a sovereign Parliament to borrow from the House of Commons. Mr. Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer retorted that since they used the English language, there was nothing wrong in taking what was good in British Parliamentary practice. Moreover, what was suggested was merely a temporary expedient which Parliament could always modify.

In regard to immunity from legal proceedings, Mr. L. K. Maitra and Mr. Rohinikumar Chaudhary urged the extension of immunity to publication of speeches by other bodies than Parliament. Mr. Ananthasayanam Iyengar, on the other hand, favoured the existing provision as it was impossible to permit unrestricted re-publication of Parliamentary speeches. He pointed out that there would be grave risk if allegations and charges inside the House were published outside.

Earlier during the debate on the article relating to oath-taking, Dr B. R. Ambedkar, Minister of Law, elucidated its procedure. Replying to Dr. Rajendra Prasad's technical question, Dr. Ambedkar said the President would, after the Speaker had been elected, confer on him the authority to administer the oath to any candidate who happened to be returned in the middle of a session.

(Details on Page 5)