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Parliament committee questions royal family's spending at palace

Family faces scrutiny from press, public

LONDON (AP) — If it's not love, it's money that troubles the royal family.

This time around, a parliamentary committee wants closer scrutiny of the 20 million pounds — the equivalent of \$31 million — it costs British taxpayers last year to keep five royal palaces going.

Newspapers carried outraged headlines Thursday and splashed sections of the committee report across their pages, including the news that Queen Elizabeth II ran up a phone bill of nearly \$1.2 million last year. "A Right Royal Ripoff" blared the newspaper Today.

Angry aides at Buckingham Palace accused newspapers, the bane of the royals' troubled lives, of distorting the report issued by the all-party Committee of Public Accounts.

For starters, said a palace spokesman, only about one-fourth of the phone bill was actual talking time. The rest went to pay 11 operators to take calls from the public at the palaces, and for rents for special lines and maintenance. And members of the family and royal house-

hold paid back \$31,000 for their private calls.

Michael Shersby, a member of the governing Conservative Party, described the report as "straightforward" and simply seeking more "public visibility" on the way the money is spent.

But the committee's leading member from the main opposition Labor Party, Alan Williams, got most of the air time, grumbling about the queen's "pampered court" and suggesting it was time she got by with just one palace.

The report covered expenditure on Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, the queen's weekend retreat west of London; St. James's Palace, where Prince Charles lives; Kensington Palace, where Princess Diana and a clutch of other royals live in separate, lavish apartments; and Clarence House, home of the queen's 94-year-old mother, Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.

The queen also has a Scottish castle, Balmoral, and Sandringham House estate in eastern England. But she maintains those as her personal property.

"We now have a situation where the royal family, which are billionaires and have two palaces of their own require another five palaces at our expense," Williams

said in a BBC interview.

"We should say, the president has House, you have the Palace ... tell us in detail why all the extra attention is needed."

The legislators took half the nearly \$7.8 billion by throwing open the Palace to visitors toward the restoration of the damaged Windsor Castle.

Royal aides accuse the queen or her staff of making it so much more money was spent on the rest of the money, said was spent on setting up the public sales of souvenirs and publicly accounted for.

"They are suggesting money has been mismanaged," said a royal spokesman on condition of anonymity in keeping palace practice. "The implication we have 600,000 people who have paid to visit the palace."

The report said that of the 280 apartments in the palace houses tied to the queen's family. Most are "grace and favor" allocated at low rental to old royal retainers.

Population conference negotiators try to reach agreement on abortion

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — With anger growing over the Vatican's hard-line stance on abortion, negotiators at the U.N. population conference Thursday hammered out what they called a last-chance compromise on the explosive issue.

A special committee assigned to write the provision on unsafe abortions agreed on a compromise text Thursday night. The main negotiating committee was expected to consider the new language on Friday.

Even if the compromise succeeds, the controversy at the conference won't end because negotiators still face other contentious provisions of the meeting's 20-year action plan.

The main committee is expected to consider sections on reproductive and sexual health on Friday that refer to "fertility regulation" and adolescent sexuality.

To address the concerns of some nations on Thursday, the World Health Organization's definition of unsafe abortion was added to the section on abortion as a health issue. That definition says abortion is unsafe if carried out by unqualified people in inappropriate settings.

To show how minutely the wording has been worked over, a new draft of the proposed compromise changes "legal" abortion to abortion that "is not against the law."

Earlier Thursday, Nicolaas Biegman, vice-chairman of the overall negotiations, said he was confident the special committee on unsafe abortion would "very, very quickly" arrive at a final compromise text.

"As far as I am concerned, (this) will be the end of the discussion in the committee because anything which could possibly be accommodated has been accommodated," he said.

Timothy Wirth, the U.S. undersecretary of state for global affairs, told reporters Thursday

night: "We're very close to getting finished. ... I expect we will get through the abortion issue tomorrow morning and it will be downhill from there."

The Vatican delegation said it was pondering how to react to the compromise, but suggested it may have a problem with the phrase "safe abortion" because abortion is "unsafe" for the fetus.

The compromise drafted on Thursday is a revision of the version put forward earlier this week by the European Union and backed by the United States, Nordic nations and several Muslim countries including Iran and Pakistan.

That text places priority on making family planning available to reduce the need for abortions. It says abortion should not be encouraged as a method of family planning and its legality should be left to individual countries. It also says women with unwanted pregnancies must be treated compassionately, not punitively.

Both Biegman and Dr. Nafis Sadik, the conference secretary-general, said they do not expect the Vatican to sign on to the 20-year blueprint to slow the world's population boom.

"I don't think it will mean anything because they did not sign the 1974 or 1984 programs of action," Dr. Sadik said. "They debated greatly throughout the discussion but in the end did not join the consensus. ... Basically, they are against contraceptive technology."

Nabarro told a news conference about 10 countries are "totally opposed" to the paragraph on unsafe abortion and about 10 others have "some real difficulties" about the language.

Despite the furious debate, it is up to every country to decide whether to implement recommendations being fashioned at the meeting of 182 delegations.

FBI investigates Napoleon's death

CHICAGO (AP) — Napoleon murdered More than 170 years ago emperor's death, the FBI is investigating the case.

Using a few strands of hair, the feds are trying to determine whether Napoleon's body was full of poison.

"It's a very hotly debated issue," said Michael LaBorde, a board member of the Napoleonic Society of America.

The Clearwater, Fla., group will release the results of the FBI tests on their significance at a meeting last day of the annual meeting in Chicago.

The history of Napoleon died of cancer. Some say he murdered the deposed emperor; others say French royalists did. And some historians say Napoleon's love of killed him.

At last year's Napoleonic Society meeting, people standing on their shouting at each other death theories, LaBorde said.

Napoleon was exiled to the British to the island of St. Helena in the southern Atlantic. His health began to fail there he died in 1821 at 51.

During his exile, British feared Napoleon might make another bid to return to France, as he had in the Mediterranean island earlier in 1815.

French royalists wanted to get Napoleon, regarding a threat to Louis XVIII's hold on the throne.

Two books, "Napoleon" by Dr. Ben and David Hapgood, soon to be published, say Napoleon's hair contained arsenic, which would indicate foul play.

Vean, who majors in Napoleonic studies at State University.

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