

"Do ministers have to assure the truthfulness of what they say?" Yes, they do.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: They are not automatons.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): I didn't say that. You are dissimulating again.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The hon. member speaks with the authority which ignorance permits him to speak.

Never during the course of the years I was Prime Minister would I ever have signed anything which had not been thoroughly examined. Otherwise one would have to pretend that the civil service is responsible. I will read this letter from the then solicitor general, only in part. I would read it all, but I do not want to waste the time of the House. The present Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Allmand) is a thoughtful and very careful man. At least that has been the experience in other matters. The letter was to the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence), and reads in part as follows:

Dear Mr. Lawrence:

This will refer to your letter dated November 21, 1973 and enclosure concerning allegations made by Mr. Wally Keeler regarding invasion of privacy and disruption of the mails by the RCMP.

● (1642)

Then it goes on to explain what the computer had to say, and adds:

As you can see, the text was sufficiently suggestive of a possible security matter to warrant an investigation by the RCMP.

Every time this government is in difficulty and wants to hide anything, ministers say it is a matter of security. The one security they are concerned about is their own security. All too often they use that for an excuse.

It goes on to say:

This investigation led by Mr. Terrence Woolf of Sudbury . . . assumed responsibility for the communication. His explanation that this was the private form of communication used between members of the People's Republic of Poetry was thought by the RCMP members to be rather far-fetched but was sufficient to convince them that this matter should be treated as a nuisance rather than a breach of security.

So it was only a nuisance. It has become more than that since.

It goes on:

On this note the RCMP investigation was concluded. The communication has been returned to the post office department. I have been assured by the RCMP that it is not their practice to intercept the private mail of anyone, and I trust that the above explanation will set your constituent's mind at ease.

What was the purpose of that? The purpose was to delude and to deceive. Why not let us get at the facts of this? I would like to see the former solicitor general, at present Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, on the witness stand. I would not want to cross-examine him. I would refrain from doing so because of our personal relationship, but somebody

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else could ask him questions. He is not anxious to get on the stand.

Mr. MacEachen: He has been there.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Yes, he has been there on other matters, but not on this. He is not anxious to get on the stand, because if he were to admit that he did not know what he was talking about, he would be an inefficient minister. If he were to admit that this letter was placed before him and he signed it without consideration or knowledge, the result would be anything but a halo for him.

Mr. MacEachen: There are very few halos in politics.

Mr. Gillies: How right you are!

Mr. Diefenbaker: I will repeat it, and that is all I will say in this connection: if you have nothing to hide, why hide it?

Now I will refer to the views of a gentleman who is often referred to in the better Liberal circles today as they view the Gallup polls. If only John Turner was available!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: I will read you what John Turner had to say two years ago when he was speaking in Winnipeg. He said this:

Where secrecy or mystery begins, vice or roguery is not far off.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: What immortal words! How truthful! I am sure that will appeal to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lalonde), and even to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie) who is smiling and apparently approves of that. I say to the ministers, they have to be very careful today, because if John Turner hears that they disregard him—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker:—what the future will hold for them will not be most hopeful.

Mr. MacEachen: We are quaking in our boots!

Mr. Diefenbaker: I repeat these words: "Where secrecy or mystery begins, vice or roguery is not far off." That is what happened here—secrecy, concealment, a minister protecting himself under pretence that the civil service is responsible. The call for secrecy has a hollow ring; it is always the call of those who are in difficulty. The Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) is in that group. He has an appetite for secrecy. I wish he were here because I would be able to point out to him one or two examples. The appetite for secrecy has become a characteristic of this government.

The government says, "Wait until the McDonald commission makes its findings." I am not speaking about the rapidity with which the commission is meeting or their thoroughness, nor about the fact that a great portion of their meetings is held