

Morality in Government

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

was only one case reported to me of any substance or consequence, and that that case gave me very great concern because it affected the security of our country, I asked him if he had anything to add to the information given to me by the R.C.M.P. as he was the prime minister at the time. I considered, Mr. Speaker, that that was the right course of action to take in the circumstances.

● (4:00 p.m.)

The next question concerns allegations that I personally or, if you like, as Prime Minister, kept possession of the R.C.M.P. Munsinger file from December, 1964, until the beginning of April, 1966. I have already pointed out, Mr. Speaker, that at no time has the R.C.M.P. file in this case been in my personal possession. All I had was a memorandum, a précis of the file. I did not keep that memorandum on my desk, as has been alleged, or in my files, as has been suggested in comments here and in the press. I turned it over, immediately I read it, to the chairman of the government security panel for safekeeping, assuming it would either be returned by him to the R.C.M.P. or would be locked up by him in a safe in the Privy Council office. And that is where it was. The Clerk of the Privy Council, who as I have said is chairman of the government security panel, did lock it up in a safe and the memorandum remained in that custody until the R.C.M.P. sent for it early in April by messenger—not to my office, because they knew where it was, but by a message to the Privy Council office. That ought to dispose of that particular point, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Starr: You hope it does.

Mr. Pearson: I hope no one will accuse the secretary of the cabinet, Clerk of the Privy Council and chairman of the security panel, of acting improperly in retaining custody of a memorandum on an R.C.M.P. security file, the original of which was with the R.C.M.P.

I never used that memorandum. It was never circulated. So far as I was concerned, it did not deal with a case involving the private and personal activities of anybody; it was a serious security matter and it was considered by me as such, and only as such.

An hon. Member: For 16 months.

Mr. Pearson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it was kept there for 15 months and if the hon. member will follow some of the evidence which is being given now, he will find out it was kept for longer than that in other places, before—

Mr. Pearson:—but in circumstances very different from those which existed when the government had changed hands and the ministry had changed. Very different, indeed.

The next question concerns the allegation that I knew in advance that this matter was going to be thrown into debate, that the name Monseignor or Munsinger would be mentioned in this house, that this was all part of a carefully calculated plot and that I had been holding the document on my desk waiting to produce it as part of that plot. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Cardin) in March, after vigorous attacks against him, including personal attacks to which he was vigorously replying—having been called among other things a dwarf in giant's clothing—did, I admit, when goaded beyond exasperation, blurt out this name.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Churchill: Don't ask us to believe that.

Mr. Pearson: I do not ask the hon. gentleman to believe anything because it would be quite impossible for him to believe anything from this side. He has been conditioned to disbelief for too long.

It has been said here and in some press and other comment—and I wish to repeat this—that I knew this was going to happen. Mr. Speaker, I had no knowledge, of any kind, that this name was going to be mentioned in any debate. That is my statement, and I stand on it and my reputation stands on it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, Hear.

Mr. Pearson: The right hon. gentleman who is scribbling notes down has undoubtedly put down: "Well, he applauded; he applauded when the Minister of Justice was speaking."

Indeed, I did applaud when the Minister of Justice was speaking. I applauded when the Minister of Justice was defending himself so vigorously against the attacks which had been made on him. I applauded when he suggested that the right hon. gentleman opposite was the last to criticize this government's handling of security cases. But if hon. members opposite will read *Hansard*—perhaps they have already done so—they will soon find out that the indications of approbation, as they have been called, were all before the word "Munsinger" was mentioned, not afterward, and *Hansard*, page 2211, March 4, 1966, will show that this was the case.