

Morality in Government

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I ask, is it possible that we want to condemn the Prime Minister before the facts can be established. Apparently we are asked to pass judgment before the case is over.

● (8:30 p.m.)

Mr. Diefenbaker: May I ask the minister a question?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Yes.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Does he doubt the truthfulness of the commissioner of the R.C.M.P.?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): My right hon. friend knows the answer that I will make to that question. I have every confidence in the R.C.M.P. But I do want to understand what is the explanation of the circumstances about which the commissioner commented the other day. I want to understand exactly what the man to whom are attributed the words had in mind. That, I think, is only fair.

I am sure that no one in this house would respect me if, after listening to this debate, occupying the position in the government that I do, sitting with the Prime Minister—who, by the way, is ill at the present time—I did not rise and at least put these questions to the house which I think any fair minded man would expect me to do, and which is the proper thing for me in the circumstances to do.

We in this house do not all agree on questions that divide us, in terms of our respective programs. We have our controversies. But, no matter what anyone thinks of the Prime Minister, does anyone really believe that the present Prime Minister of Canada is the kind of man who could possibly undertake the kind of course that is suggested and that is implicit in this amendment?

An hon. Member: What did the commissioner say?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I am trying to deal with this matter as reasonably as I can, in the absence of the Prime Minister. I ask again, does anyone really believe that the present Prime Minister of Canada is the kind of man who would undertake to deal with a situation like this in the way which is suggested in the amendment before the house?

An hon. Member: No.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Does this accord with his reputation?

An hon. Member: No.

[Mr. Orlikow.]

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Is he the type of man who would do what the assumptions indicate?

I say, as one who has known him long before I came into this house, this is not in accord with his past conduct, either as a diplomat, as a minister, as Prime Minister, or as an individual. That is the opinion I am sure of every hon. member in this house. His record, surely, has been concerned with individual rights, and not with the destruction of the rights of individuals. There has been criticism about his conduct in the Spencer case.

An hon. Member: That was quite justified.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): We all know what was behind the attitude he took in that case. He did what he did because he had a deep regard for individual human rights and was very greatly concerned that there might have been an infraction of those human rights.

Mr. Diefenbaker: After how long?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I happen to know something about his attitude in the matter, and I can say this without fear of contradiction: that there was no one in this house more anxious than was he to make sure that no act of his government was in any way infringing unduly on the rights of the individual concerned. I cannot believe that anyone in this house really and sincerely believes that the present Prime Minister would deliberately embark upon a course to affect the rights of individual members of this house.

The revision of our security procedures, long before this matter arose, has been a concern of his. He had every reason to be deeply concerned at a time long before he was Prime Minister of this country. His concern, for instance, for the right of collective bargaining in the civil service is based upon his concern for the rights of the individual.

I do not expect that anything I have said will bring this matter to a conclusion. I did feel tonight, during the dinner hour, because he could not be here, because he has been the object of the attacks, that I owed to him, because of my belief in his integrity and good intentions at least to ask this house to wait until an explanation of the facts had been given. I have enough confidence in my fellow members in this house, in all parts, to believe that this courtesy will be extended to him.