

*Morality in Government*

this. Last Friday there was ample opportunity to make such a statement. It was not made.

There being only a few moments before the vote is taken, and some other hon. members wishing to speak, I shall make my remarks as concise and to the point as possible. The basic issue in this amendment is whether or not the Prime Minister asked the commissioner of the R.C.M. Police to ascertain whether he had any information on his files which would indicate any impropriety or anything of a scandalous nature involving any hon. member in any party, over the last ten years.

No one will question the right of the government to use files in order to take action against any member of parliament or against anyone else who has broken the law, or who is guilty of some misdemeanour. But what has alarmed the country, and what has disturbed and dismayed a great many Canadians is the possibility that R.C.M.P. files were to be used in order to intimidate or to blackmail members of parliament.

If that process were to be started with members of parliament, there is no reason why it should not be extended to candidates; there is no reason why it should not be extended to the presidents and secretaries of political organizations in the constituencies; there is no reason why it should not eventually be extended to looking at income tax returns or at any other type of documents which have always been considered confidential. Therefore the house and the country are properly exercised about the statement which was attributed to the commissioner of the R.C.M.P.

This afternoon the Prime Minister said that he had not asked for an investigation by the R.C.M.P. into any of the private improprieties, or into any of the things of a scandalous nature concerning the private lives of members of parliament. Mr. Speaker, I accept the Prime Minister's statement. I do not think we can have government in this country unless we are prepared to accept the statement of the Prime Minister made on the floor of the House of Commons.

However, when the hon. member for La-pointe says that anyone who votes for this amendment is saying that the Prime Minister lied, I want to take issue with him. While the Prime Minister denied asking for an investigation into the private peccadillos of members of parliament, he did say, as I understood him, that he had asked the R.C.M.P. commissioner to examine the files to see if

there were any improprieties, or anything of a scandalous nature respecting any members in any parties, over the last ten years, with reference to their public lives. That would be with reference to such things as intervening in matters having to do with the Department of Justice, or with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, or with anything having to do with security. Mr. Speaker, I submit that while that is less reprehensible than asking the R.C.M.P. to look into the private lives of members, it is still reprehensible.

I should like to know, for instance, why the Prime Minister would ask for this information about members of parliament, going back over a period of over ten years. I should like to know what he proposed to do with this information. I should like to know what action he proposed to take on the basis of those files. If he were here and if he were prepared to tell the house that, we might understand his motives.

I do not for a moment question the Prime Minister's right to ask for any information that he can get regarding members of the cabinet and parliamentary secretaries because, with the collective responsibility of cabinet, he is responsible for anything they do and he must know everything about cabinet members that it is possible for him to find out.

Nor do I question his right, through the Minister of Justice, to say to the commissioner of the R.C.M. Police: "If you had information on your files regarding any members of parliament or anybody else on which you have not taken action because of political pressures in the past, I, as Prime Minister, am now authorizing you to take such action, and to take it into the courts, and to take it in the proper manner through the due process of law".

● (8:30 p.m.)

But, Mr. Speaker, I object strongly to the Prime Minister setting himself up as a judge and jury and having placed on his desk files collected by the R.C.M.P., and having discretion placed in his hands as to what use will be made of those files. If there is anything in those files which indicates that some criminal act has been committed, if there is any misdemeanor shown there, then the R.C.M.P. should have acted on them long ago. If the Minister of Justice wants to instruct the R.C.M.P. to take such action now he will have our full support. But surely it is an

[Mr. Douglas.]