

*Privilege—Mr. Lawrence*

invites us to extend that to its logical conclusion and to suggest that nothing should go to a committee.

The Deputy Prime Minister contented himself with those five reasons, but his parliamentary secretary came up with a couple more for urging his colleagues to vote against this motion. He said that the motion questions the credibility of the McDonald commission. Months after the commission began operating a government lawyer appeared before it and said that from that point on the Privy Council wanted the right to decide what the commission should hear in public and what it should hear in private. That makes this question of credibility look pretty weak. Frankly, that is like comparing a demi-tasse with a swill bucket. It just makes no sense at all. As recorded in page after page of commission proceedings the government's lawyer argued that the Privy Council should be deciding what should be public and what should be private. That in itself questions the credibility of the McDonald commission. Does the parliamentary secretary mean to tell this House that a committee investigating a deliberate attempt to obstruct a member in the performance of his duties creates a question regarding the credibility of the McDonald commission? Nonsense.

Finally, the parliamentary secretary made a long and impassioned argument regarding the lack of urgency of this matter. Allegedly, the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham should have raised this matter a long time ago.

**Mr. Boulanger:** Right. That is a weakness.

**Mr. Jarvis:** That is a good argument, and do hon. members know what it is good for? It would have been a good argument regarding a prima facie case. At that point that argument should have been made. It would have been a good argument. Many questions of privilege have been refused on the basis that there was no prima facie case because of lack of urgency. I agree that that is an excellent argument, but although there was all the opportunity in the world almost a month ago to argue lack of urgency, that argument was not made.

However, once a prima facie has been established, it is too late to make that argument. Hon. members opposite missed their day in court in that regard, and to raise it now, to go over it time and again and to suggest that government members should vote against this motion because of lack of urgency, simply does not hold water. Hon. members opposite profess not to disagree with Mr. Speaker and not to question his ruling, but then after a prima facie case has been found, they turn around and argue that there is lack of urgency. That simply will not wash. It is too late for that. When hon. members make that argument at this point, they challenge the competence of Mr. Speaker. When they make that argument at this point, that is exactly what they are doing.

**Mr. Boulanger:** No, sir. Explain.

**Mr. Jarvis:** Who are they who might be tempted to vote against this motion? I cannot name them, but they are those who wish to perpetuate the cover-up, the stonewalling, the delay and the whole litany of procedures the government has

[Mr. Jarvis.]

practised for months respecting the broader issue of security service operations which led to the setting up of the McDonald commission. Ample evidence regarding that issue has been forthcoming for months now, not just in this debate. There have been questions during question periods, speeches and questions of privilege for months and months.

At first there was supposed to be one isolated incident. Then there was contradictory evidence, and we went on and on. There was an attempt to cover up. Prima facie cases having been established, there have been only two incidents since, I believe, 1965 in which government members voted against sending matters to committee. It is a remarkable coincidence that those two instances related to this particular issue. One would have to be very naive to believe that that is coincidence.

Who else might be tempted to vote against this motion? There are those who wish to have the executive proceed without accountability to the highest court of this country, this parliament. In the interests of expediency and efficiency there might be some who would say that executive action need not be accounted for to anyone. I believe that is the philosophy of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). It has been the philosophy of many political leaders, none of whom were very successful over the long run and most of whom were regretted in terms of history. However, that philosophy appears to be very much the philosophy of this government.

It has been said that ministers should be expected not only not to know about day to day operations but that they should virtually and deliberately avoid knowing. That is one of the most outstanding statements I have ever heard in terms of its repugnance to me. It is absolutely unacceptable in terms of all I have come to know about parliamentary democracy. It is unacceptable by any yardstick because its logical extension would be that there should be government by the executive branch alone. I cannot accept that.

Nor can I accept the establishment by the executive of a special agency to examine the executive, such as the McDonald commission, as a replacement for accountability to parliament. With all its inefficiencies, with all its lack of expediency and with all the frustrations there may be, accountability to parliament has been the best system ever devised. If someone can show me a better system which eliminates the need for having the executive account for its actions and which at the same time protects the interests of the people it is set up to serve, then I would be the first to change my mind; but for centuries of parliament the fact that such a system exists has never been successfully argued.

• (1752)

Finally, there will be a group which might be tempted to vote against this motion. This group would be those who wish the rights and privileges of members to take second place to political expediency and political cover-up. Now, sir, in a pre-election period, as we all know, atmospheres change, attitudes change, performances change. That is part of the system. But that does not mean that one changes one's integrity. It does not have to mean that one compromises one's principles.