

Morality in Government

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, may I refer to the ruling which you actually made yesterday because it seems to me that this is what we should have before us and not an interpretation from hon. members opposite. What was said yesterday is found at page 4590 of *Hansard*, namely:

When I made my ruling a moment ago I said that there was much merit to the suggestion made by the hon. member for Peace River that certain decisions or bits and pieces of evidence which come out in the course of a hearing might not be of the essence of the matter which is before a royal commission or inquiry, and because of this we should not be precluded from discussing certain matters. I do not want to reduce this to the absurd but, for example, if in the course of his evidence a witness said that it was raining or was not raining we could not come to the conclusion that we could not discuss the weather in the House of Commons. In other words, there is a limitation in this regard. We cannot eliminate from our discussion in the house any evidence that is presented before a commission.

That is what Your Honour ruled.

Mr. Greene: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member would read the next paragraph of your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: I would rather not hear it.

Mr. Fulton: I think you probably would read it better than I would.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the wish of hon. members to continue the debate on the point of order? Are there any further contributions?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Obviously the point at issue here is the ruling made quite some time ago by Mr. Speaker Macdonald which I quoted on the occasion of the ruling I made yesterday, and it is to the following effect:

I would accordingly rule that it is not out of order to discuss transportation problems generally when such matters have been referred to a royal commission.

On the other hand, I would also rule that reference should not be made to the proceedings, or evidence, or findings of a royal commission before it has made its report.

This is a very restrictive ruling. I said yesterday that I did not want to use this ruling to preclude any discussion or reference to the Spence inquiry, and I believe I was as lenient as I could be in the circumstances in allowing the discussion which took place yesterday and also in allowing the amendment moved by the hon. member for Royal. However, the point is still there that this ruling

[Mr. Speaker.]

exists. I believe it is a precedent by which I am bound and by which hon. members are bound.

While it is possible in my view to make reference in a general way to collateral matters, which I believe was the ruling I made yesterday, which may come up in the course of an inquiry, in my mind, there should not be a specific reference to the evidence itself. I did feel that in view of this ruling the right hon. Leader of the Opposition should not quote from the evidence.

The point raised by one of the members who took part in the discussion, that we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly, is well taken. I believe it would not be in order to read from the evidence at the present time in the course of this debate in view of the ruling to which I have referred. I do not believe that this has been done by the Prime Minister in the course of his speech. If he did, I failed to catch it. I would invite the right hon. Leader of the Opposition not to quote directly or indirectly from the evidence which was taken in the course of the inquiry.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I shall try to keep within your ruling. However, I want to point out the fact that the Prime Minister has given an expurgated explanation of what actually took place and has interpreted what the evidence was. Now I want to place on the record the evidence which answers him 100 per cent. It indicates that the revelation which he made today as to what took place bears only a distant relationship to the truth.

• (4:50 p.m.)

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Filibuster. Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Is the minister now rising on a point of order?

Mr. MacEachen: I am rising on a point of order which has to do with a statement made by the Leader of the Opposition. It has to do with a very fundamental practice in the House of Commons. As I understood the right hon. gentleman, he stated that a statement made this afternoon by the Prime Minister had a distant relationship to the truth. I should like to refer to citation 145 in *Beauchesne*, Mr. Speaker, which reads as follows:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers in the Canadian Commons that a statement by an honourable member respecting himself and peculiarly within his own knowledge must be accepted—

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that almost all of the statements that have been made by the