

Morality in Government

Mr. Pearson: That happens to be the literal and absolute truth. My request, Mr. Speaker, was not for information about a particular case. My request through the Minister of Justice, whom I consulted first because he was the minister responsible for the R.C.M.P., was that the R.C.M.P. search their records and give me evidence, if there was such evidence, of other cases, beginning with the government, that they had investigated in which members of parliament, whether ministers or not, were in any way involved or mentioned in connection with this kind of thing. I wanted to get information on the nature and the magnitude of this problem. It was my duty to try to secure that information and to make sure, Mr. Speaker—and I have witnesses to this statement and to other statements I have been making because these meetings were not held in the presence of only one person—that the request for the records, which I claim to be a perfectly proper procedure in the circumstances, covered a period when both parties were in power. I asked those who had compiled the records to go back ten years, so that it would not look as if I were just delving into the records of the previous government's time.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pearson: My hon. friends may scoff at this sort of thing. Perhaps it is not the kind of procedure they would have followed if they were asking for records.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pearson: My own notes, made at the time—and I made notes at the time, and of the discussions I had with the commissioner of the R.C.M. Police and the secretary of the Privy Council who was present—made my own purposes quite clear.

Mr. Grégoire: May I ask a question of the Prime Minister?

Mr. Pearson: Yes.

Mr. Grégoire: Did the R.C.M.P. give to the Prime Minister other files at that time besides the Munsinger file?

Mr. Pearson: I am just coming to that.

Mr. Churchill: How many have you got?

Mr. Pearson: It is a laughing matter to my hon. friend but it will not be, as the matter develops.

Mr. Churchill: It is not a laughing matter.

Mr. Diefenbaker: It is not.

[Mr. Pearson.]

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, my first request was made toward the end of November. The commissioner of the R.C.M.P. has indicated it was December 2nd that we met. He told me at that time that he had conducted a search and had looked into the records and that there was only one case of any significance at all, although he mentioned two or three that were quite inconsequential in which an hon. member's name happened to be mentioned in a very inoffensive or innocent way. There was only one case, so he told me, of any significance or consequence, in the inquiries that had been made in which an hon. member was involved. I found this report, Mr. Speaker, very reassuring indeed in respect of the involvement of hon. members generally in the kinds of things which were being talked about at that time and have been talked about, indeed, subsequently.

On this particular case the commissioner of the R.C.M.P. left a memorandum with me. It was not a file. I have never seen the file in this case and I have never asked for it. I saw a memorandum made by the police or a copy of it, a précis, if you like. This copy of the memorandum or précis of the file was left with me by the commissioner. The Clerk of the Privy Council, who is the chairman of the security committee of the government, was present when I received this memorandum. I studied that memorandum that evening, December 2, and I realized at once its importance from a security point of view.

Surely there is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, in the minds of hon. members that this particular case was an important one from a security point of view. That is the consideration that mattered in this case and the only consideration.

Mr. Churchill: You took no action.

Mr. Pearson: It was the only consideration that mattered. This is a far cry from the picture that has been painted by some hon. members, by some persons outside the house and by this amendment, of the Prime Minister asking that the private lives of all members of this house be investigated.

At the beginning of December, Mr. Speaker, as I considered it to be my duty, I advised the right hon. Leader of the Opposition about my great concern in respect of the one case that had been brought to my attention and about the situation generally. I told him about the information I had been getting and about my reasons for making the inquiry. Having also advised him that there