

*Morality in Government*

(Mr. Diefenbaker) and I are among those who have been in this house the longest. I must say that I had thought the question put the other day by the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) was out of order. I had thought also, though I must have been mistaken, that the present amendment, on the basis of our rules and practice, was likewise out of order. However, Mr. Speaker, who so obviously has the confidence of everyone in this house, has ruled otherwise. Of course we accept his ruling without reservation.

The Leader of the Opposition has made a number of speeches in which he sought to indicate to the Canadian people what parliament is. I must say that with a lot of what he has said in that regard I cannot find myself in disagreement. I think one of the most salutary consequences of this parliament is that in Mr. Speaker we have someone who unquestionably enjoys the confidence of every member in this house. On the basis of long experience in this house, I suggest this will prove to be a vital factor in the preservation of this parliamentary institution.

Now, I have risen at this time because I could not sit in my seat and hear the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) attacked, and not offer some explanation, first of all for his absence and, second, to indicate as reasonably and as fairly as I can what I believe should be the governing factors in the consideration which we give to this matter at least until he has an opportunity of taking part in our discussions. The Prime Minister is absent because he is suffering from a 'flu condition, but he hopes to be able to be here tomorrow.

In order that there will be no misunderstanding, I may say his condition is not a serious one but his doctors did not think it would be wise for him to be here today. He will be here tomorrow, and he wishes to take part in this debate to explain what he believes to be the interpretation of a situation that has been described by someone else in the inquiry that is under way. I have thought it would be worth while to say that it must be clear to all of us that the amendment we have been discussing this afternoon is obviously not based on fact. The most that one can say at this stage is that the argument has been based on assumptions.

The hon. member who has just taken his seat spoke about files. I do not recall any reference being made to files. I may be wrong in this regard, but it seems to me in a matter of this importance none of us will consciously want to be loose or imprecise in the use of

words, because of the implications involving what is basic in this amendment, that is the protection of the individual rights of members of this house, just as we would be jealous of the protection of the individual rights of any Canadian citizen.

Am I wrong in suggesting that this amendment, moved by an hon. member for whom all of us have a high regard, is an amendment that assumes a certain conduct without finding out if the assumption is correct? It is an amendment based on a one-sided interpretation of events, as they are presumed to have existed. I do not know whether or not they do. This amendment assumes that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were asked to provide information on the past conduct of members, without limitation as to time. Is that a correct assumption? Are these the facts? Some hon. members have been participating in this debate as though this were, in fact, the true situation, without having had an opportunity of hearing from the Prime Minister, who is alleged to be the author of the remarks attributed to him by a third party.

I suggest that if we have confidence in this parliament—and I am one who has confidence in this institution—surely the facts ought to be ascertained fully before deploring and condemning. The amendment and the assumptions are remarkable because they derive from information at an inquiry, without waiting for that inquiry to be completed. Why is it so urgent to make the assumptions without waiting for the hearings to end? Why is it so urgent that parliament cannot wait until it has the views of the commissioner, and all the facts, before deploring and condemning.

**An hon. Member:** We know what he will say.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** I do not know what that interjection was, but I think what I have said is based on ordinary principles of justice as we understand them and as we generally seek to practise them in this country.

**Mr. Peters:** We never went into this file business before—at least, I hope we did not.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** That is the very argument: Have we gone into them.

**Mr. Orlikow:** The commissioner went into it.