

*Morality in Government*

in a cold war and details concerning personal weaknesses or aberrations, normally completely irrelevant in public life, may be collected and put into a file. The private aberrations of individuals may affect their public responsibility. This is a matter which cannot be helped. But the very fact that police files may contain derogatory and often inaccurate information about individuals is precisely the reason they should not be used, should never be made available to be used, and should never be sought to be made available to be used for purposes that do not affect the security of the state.

As members of parliament we are not freed from the obligation of accounting to the law. If charges are to be made, of course, any files relating to us ought to be revealed as in any other case. We are not in any sense above the law. But what we do have the right to insist on, Mr. Speaker, is that information of this nature collected in confidence for security purposes should not be used, particularly by governments, to strike back at opponents even when governments are suffering from political criticism. Such a proposal is utterly intolerable in a democracy. Criticism in this house may be and often is harsh and sometimes unfair. However harshly and however unfairly one is criticized, one has absolutely no right to use confidential police dossiers for the improper purpose of striking back or threatening to strike back at individual members in this house.

● (5:20 p.m.)

What are the circumstances surrounding the matter we are discussing? In November, 1964, the present administration was under bitter attack. The hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) had revealed an attempted bribe by an executive assistant to one of the members of the government and also the possible implication in the matter of the then Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister. Another cabinet minister was under suspicion of influence peddling for which he has subsequently been convicted.

The Prime Minister was naturally hurt by revelations of this sort affecting people he trusted. Under those circumstances, for him to ask the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for reports on his own colleagues was both natural and proper. But, Mr. Speaker, when he went further and asked for files and information on other members of parliament of all parties relating to any misconduct or scandalous matter over the past ten years, I suggest, if this is a fact—unfortunately we

have no explanation of this matter at the moment—that the Prime Minister was yielding to the ugly mood of the moment, the mood of counterattack by improper methods. If this was his purpose, and so it appears, in our submission he was demeaning the function of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to that of a political police force. I do not think there is any point in labouring this matter at great length. The proper functioning of parliament and of parliamentary democracy is based upon the mutual respect of persons and groups in parliament. We have political differences. I hope we shall continue to have them. We have political parties with different principles. But, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that basic to the functioning of our party system is this mutual respect of persons and groups in parliament. It is the erosion, the wearing away, of this mutual respect that in my view threatens to paralyse parliament and discredit democracy. When confidential police reports are sought for the purpose of possibly being used or threatened to be used against hon. members of this house, which seems to me an utterly improper purpose, then we believe that democracy itself is in danger.

The people of Canada, Mr. Speaker, urgently hope that his parliament can get down to doing the business for which it was elected, that of legislating in the interests of the people of this country. It is our duty, no matter how painful it is, no matter what respect and affection we may have for some members of this house, including the Prime Minister against whom these remarks are directed, to stand firm on certain principles. One of the principles of this house and of every parliamentary institution, I suggest, is that secret police reports shall not be used or threatened to be used against anybody. If anybody wants to make a charge let him make that charge in the courts and have it dealt with in that way.

Matters affecting the privileges of members of this house must be brought out openly. It is intolerable that this house should be under the cloud of the sort of suspicion and counter-suspicion that presently exists. It is intolerable that R.C.M.P. files should be used for such a purpose.

I have even heard of immigration files being used. It is intolerable that people such as myself, who act in immigration matters, should have the files in such cases looked into to see if there is anything discreditable in our professional conduct in connection with such a matter. It seems to me reasonable to think