

Ministerial Conduct

Mr. Diefenbaker: —when he said—wait until I finish the sentence—that he had no procedural opportunity to make an explanation until yesterday.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Kindt: This howling down of people has got to stop.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is difficult enough for the Chair without extraneous assistance. I am interested in these remarks, but I am sure the right hon. Leader of the Opposition will confine himself to the matter under discussion today.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I was pointing out that what the Prime Minister learned yesterday was that procedurally he could have done that and made his explanation at any time; and certainly having learned that yesterday I am surprised the two ministers would not rise and give the house the facts.

They did not do it. Mr. Speaker, they cannot sit this out. They have got to explain what took place and, not having done so, I say to you that no matter is more important than that this be thoroughly discussed; because editorial comment across Canada has been unanimous, I believe—I know of no exception—that an explanation must be made, that this must be cleared up because the circumstances reveal a surprising lack of appreciation for those things that must be maintained not only by ministers but by members.

I say, sir, that under all the circumstances there is urgency. It is a most important matter. The integrity of parliament is the most important matter with which we can deal. These ministers had the opportunity today to explain, but they kept their mouths sealed. We want to know the facts now and there is only one way in which we can find them out; this is through the motion in question.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the right hon. gentleman dealt not, of course, with the urgency of the matter but with the substance of it, and I assume I will be given the same opportunity.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Absolutely.

Mr. Pearson: He also dealt with it within the context of what he called ministerial ethics. It might help the Leader of the Opposition in coming to a reasonable conclusion on questions of ministerial ethics if he could recall some of the difficulties when he was prime minister which concerned the ministerial

discharge of affairs and the action, or lack of action, which he took at that time in the discharge of his responsibilities.

Mr. Diefenbaker: When?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, may I read this—

Mr. Diefenbaker: No innuendos. Go ahead and reveal what you had in mind.

Mr. Pearson: I am reading from *Hansard* of 1959:

We shall not permit, we shall not allow, in our country that something to occur which brought about devastating effects on a responsible government in another country whereby individuals were tried by television, whereby evidence was introduced by innuendo and hearsay.

I say this, that it ill becomes anyone in the house to bring forward a shadow of a motion that in no way offers any proof and behind which the mover does not stand. I will do my utmost to protect the rights of parliament. It is one of the glories of the Canadian parliament that there are few cases in our history where there has been wrongdoing, but where there is wrongdoing it is the responsibility of the Prime Minister and all members of the house to do their part to see that it is punished.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: I say stand up and make a charge of wrongdoing and stand behind it. I continue the quotation:

Here we have but a piece of paper containing a motion ingeniously contrived in order to sow suspicion.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Who was the mover of the motion?

Mr. Pearson:

The hon. gentleman moving the motion will not take his stand behind the truth of the allegations... I say this. I hope I shall never allow any hon. member to be struck in his honour and integrity by a motion such as this, a motion of suspicion fortified only by questions, with the mover holding the high and responsible position of Leader of the Opposition refusing to accept his personal responsibility to make a charge on the basis of his opinion and belief with respect to the alleged findings of wrongdoing...

These observations, Mr. Speaker, were made by the right hon. gentleman—

Mr. Diefenbaker: And I stand behind them today.

Mr. Pearson: —on June 17, 1959. Let him get up now and make a charge.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: He won't do that, Mr. Speaker, any more than the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) will do it when he goes on television and talks about lack of integrity in high places.